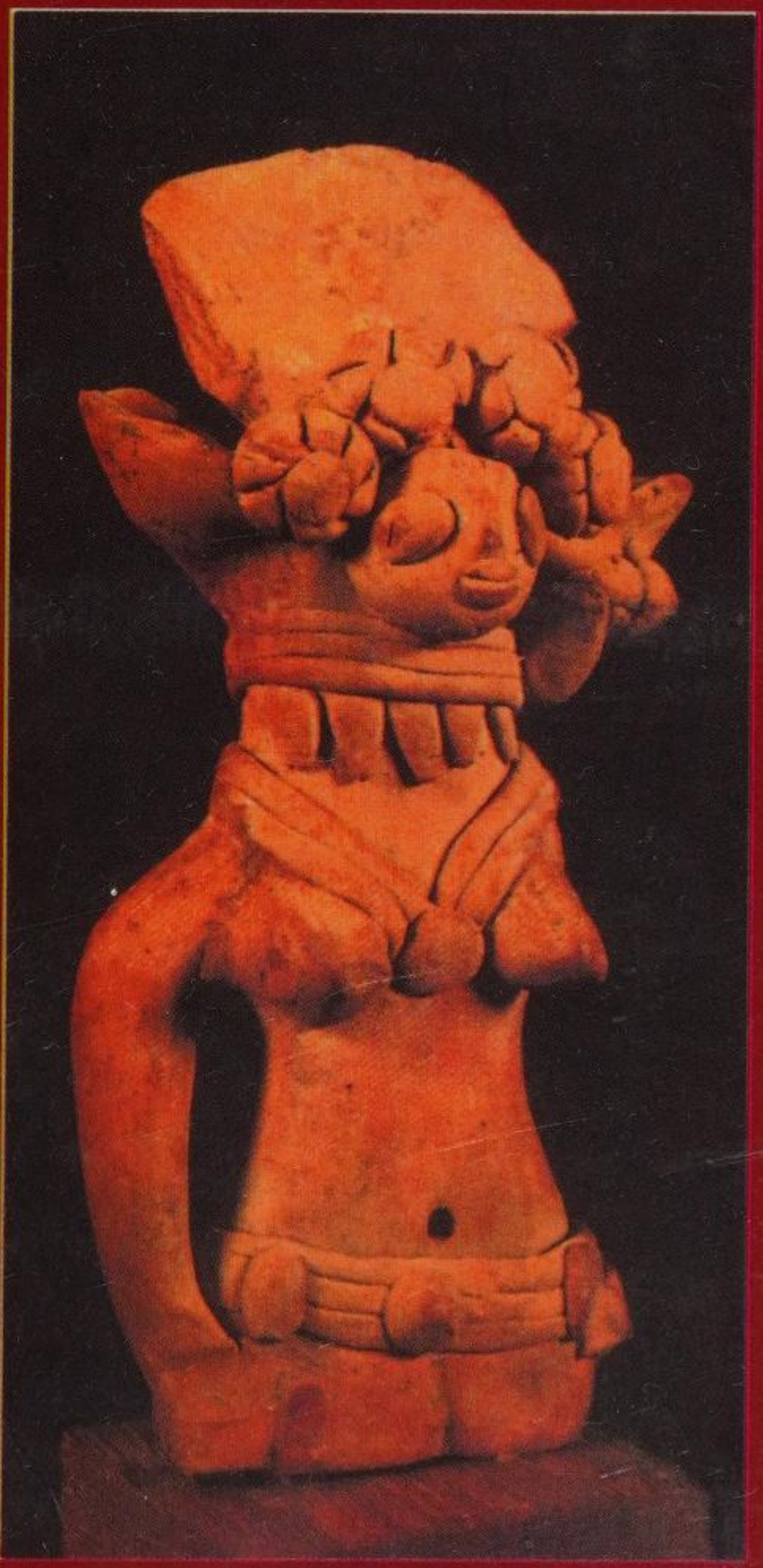
The Indian MOTHER GODDESS

THIRD ENLARGED EDITION



N. N. BHATTACHARYYA

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THE INDIAN MOTHER GODDESS

THE INDIAN MOTHER GODDESS

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First published, 1970
Second edition thoroughly revised and enlarged, 1977
Third enlarged edition, 1999

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ISBN 81-7304-324-8

Published by
Ajay Kumar Jain for
Manohar Publishers & Distributors
4753/23 Ansari Road, Daryaganj
New Delhi 110002

Printed at
Print Perfect
A-23 Mayapuri, Phase II
New Delhi 110064

To

The memory of my father-in-law,

the late Prabhat Kumar Chatterjee,

jurist and linguist

Preface to the Third Edition

The book was written in the 1960s and serialized in an historical journal, *Indian Studies Past and Present*, edited by the late Prof. Debiprasad Chattopądhyaya. Subsequently it came out as an independent treatise in 1970. The second edition with some alterations and additions came out from Manohar in 1977. Since the text in its present form appears to be complete in itself—evidently from the author's viewpoint despite shortcomings—no basic change has been made in its main body in this edition, but in order to make it more useful to the readers two extra appendices have been added—one on the Realm of Kāmākhyā and the other contains a list of important Puranic Goddesses. In addition, bibliography has been updated. It is at the behest of my esteemed friend Ramesh Jain of Manohar Publishers & Distributors that this new edition has been prepared. I thank him and Ajay for bringing out this book for the third time.

Joraghat NARENDRA NATH BHATTACHARYYA
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Preface to the Second Edition

The present volume is a revised and enlarged version of my earlier work published in 1970. The cult of the Indian Mother Goddess has been reviewed here in a much wider historical perspective with greater details about its functional role in different religious systems. The first edition, despite many of its shortcomings, earned a great deal of popularity. I shall consider my labour amply rewarded if the present edition also succeeds in meeting the needs of the readers.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Mukhlesur Rahman, Director, Varendra Research Museum, Rajsahi University, Bangladesh, who has helped me by supplying a few valuable books from his personal collection. I must also thank Shri Ramesh C. Jain of Manohar Book Service without whose enthusiasm it would not have been possible for me to prepare the present edition.

Department of Ancient NARENDRA NATH BHATTACHARYYA
Indian History & Culture,
Calcutta University,
14.7.1977

Abbreviations

AA	*American Anthropologist*
ABORI	*Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
ABT	*Anat-Baal Texts*
Ain	*Ain-i-Akbari*
Ait	*Aitareya*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
Anab	*Anabasis*
ARASI ASIAR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*
ARSIE	*Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy*
ASR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Cunningham's Reports*
AT	*Assam Tribune*
AV	*Atharvaveda*
BG	*Bombay Gazetteer*
BJ	*Bonner Jahrbücher*, LXXXIII, 1887
BMC	*British Museum Catalogue of Coins*
Br	*Brāhmaṇa*
Br.S	*Bṛhatsaṃhitā*
Br.U	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
CHI	*Cambridge History of India*
Ch.U	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
CR	*Calcutta Review*
Devi M	*Devīmāhātmya*
Devi Bh.	*Devībhāgavata*
Dio. Sic	*Diodorus Siculus*
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*

DRBV	*D.R. Bhandarkar Volume*
EA	*Eastern Art*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
ERE	*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*
FILS	*Foreigners in India and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī*, ed. D.C. Sircar, Cal. Univ.
FL	*Folklore*
GOS	*Gaekwad's Oriental Series*
GS	*Gṛhyasūtra*
GST	*Guhyasamāja Tantra*
I	*Iraq*
IA	*Indian Antiquary*
IAR	*Indian Archaeology : A Review*
IC	*Indian Culture*
IGI	*Imperial Gazetteer of India*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
ILN	*Illustrated London News*
IO	Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* (Loeb)
Ind.	*Indica* of Arrian
JAnSB	*Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JAS	*Journal of the Asiatic Society*
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JAS(S)	*Journal of the Asiatic Society (Science)*
JBBRAS	*Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JBRS	*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JKHRS	*Journal of the Karnataka Historical Research Society*
JMU	*Journal of Madras University*
JOI	*Journal of the Oriental Institute*
JRAI	*Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*
JRAnI	*Journal of the Anthropological Institute*
JRASB	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JUPHS	*Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*
Kath	*Kāṭhaka*
KS	*Kāmasūtra*

Mait	*Maitrāyaṇī*
MASI	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
Mbh	*Mahābhārata*
MI	*Man in India*
MR	*Modern Review*
NINQ	*North Indian Notes and Queries*
Nir	*Nirukta*
NRRFV	*N.R. Ray Felicitation Volume*, Calutta 1977
P, Pu.	*Purāṇa*
Pār	*Pāraskara*
PBDFV	*P.B. Desai Felicitation Volume*, Dharwar 1971
Perip	*Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*
PMC	*Punjab Museum Catalogue of Coins*
PMCA	*Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*
PNQ	*Punjab Notes and Queries*
PSHT	*Proceedings of the Society of Historical Theology*, Oxford 1902
QJMS	*Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*
R	Same as *ASR*
Rām	*Rāmāyaṇa*
RT	*Rājataraṅgiṇī*
RV	*Ṛgveda*
RWVRM	*Report on the Working of Varendra Research Museum*, Rajsahi 1969
S	*Science*
Saṃ	*Saṃhitā*
Sān	*Sāṅkhyāyana*
Śat	*Śatapatha*
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East*
SII	*South Indian Inscriptions*
SKACV	*S.K. Ayangar Commemoration Volume*, 1930
SS	*Śrautasūtra*
Taitt	*Taittirīya*
TES	*Transactions of the Ethnological Society*
UE	*Ur Excavations*, Oxford 1927
VA	*The Vedic Age*, ed. by R.C. Majumdar
VS	*Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*

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Introduction

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTION

In primitive society the clan centred on the women, on whom the responsibility rested for the essentially important function of rearing the young and of imparting to them whatever could be characterized as the human heritage at the dawn of civilization. All cultural traits, including habits, norms of behaviours, inherited traditions, etc., were formed by and transmitted through the females. The woman was not only the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of life. Her organs and attributes were thought to be endowed with generative power, and so they were the life-giving symbols. In the earliest phases of social evolution, it was this *maternity* that held the field, the life-producing mother being the central figure of religion. This has been proved by the plentiful discovery of palaeolithic female figurines in bone, ivory, and stone with the maternal organs grossly exaggerated.

The following observations of Professor E.O. James, who made a thorough archaeological study of the cult of the Mother Goddess, are really significant for an historical understanding of our subject.

> An adequate supply of offspring and food being a necessary condition of human existence, the promotion and conservation of life have a fundamental urge from palaeolithic times to the present day which has found magico-religious expression in a very deeply laid and highly developed cultus. Exactly when and where it arose is still very obscure, but

> it was from Western Asia, the South Russian plain and the valley of the Don that female figurines, commonly called 'Venuses', in bone, ivory, stone and bas-relief, often with maternal organs grossly exaggerated, were introduced into Western and Central Europe at the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic by an Asiatic migration in what is now known as the Gravettian culture, the former Upper Aurignacian. . . . With the transition from food-gathering to food-production the female principle continued to predominate the cultus that had grown up around the mysterious forces of birth and generation. Woman being the mother of the race, she was essentially the life-producer and in that capacity she played the essential role in the production of offspring. Nevertheless, as agriculture and herding became the established modes of maintaining the food-supply, the two poles of creative energy, the one female and receptive, the other male and begettive, could hardly fail to be recognized and given their respective symbolic significance. But although phallic emblems became increasingly prominent from Neolithic times onwards, the maternal principle, in due course personified as Mother Goddess, continued to assume the leading role in the cultus, especially in Western Asia, Crete and the Aegean, where the male god was subordinate to the Goddess. Essential in physiological fact as the conjunction of male and female is in the production of life, it would seem that at first there was some uncertainty about the significance of paternity. Therefore, as the precise function of the male partner in relation to conception and birth was less obvious, and probably less clearly understood, it is hardly surprising that he should be regarded as supplementary rather than as the vital agent in the process. Consequently, the mother and her maternal organs and attributes were the life-giving symbols *par excellence*.[1]

These observations of Professor James may serve tentatively as the basis of our investigations. The material mode of life of a people ordinarily provides the rationale for the type of deity and the manner of worship prevalent in a given society. In a hunting society a special relationship generally develops between man and animal which leads its members to perform

certain magical rites to secure prey in the next hunting expedition, or for other related ends. Their staple diet acquired a sacred character and significance. Relics of this primitive belief in the sacredness of the staple diet are found abundantly in the later sacrificial cults. Very probably these peoples grasped the generative function of women and sought magically to extend it to the animals and plants that nourished them. The Venus figures, of which we have already occasion to refer, had no faces, but their sexual characters were always emphasized. They were simply used in some sort of fertility ritual to ensure the multiplication of game.

The religious beliefs and practices of the food-gatherers were modified according to the new social ideals introduced by the Neolithic changes. Magic must have still been practised in order to ensure the fruitfulness of the earth, despite the enlarged real control over nature, thus introducing agricultural rituals in addition to those connected with hunting. The Upper Palaeolithic graves, in different parts of the world, were furnished with food, implements and ornaments; often the bones are found reddened with ochre. 'To paint bones with the ruddy colouring of life was the 'nearest thing to mummification which the palaeolithic peoples knew; it was an attempt to make the body again serviceable for its owner's use'.[2] In Neolithic societies, the purpose of burial was changed. It was done with more pomp and social effort. The dead, so reverently deposited in the earth, was supposed somehow to affect the crops that sprang from the earth and was juxtaposed to the existing Mother Goddess cult, the Earth Mother thus becoming the guardian of the dead connected alike with the corpse and the seed corn beneath the earth.[3] The Neolithic goddess was not simply the life-producing mother. The earth from whose bosom the grains sprout was imagined as a goddess who might be influenced like a woman by entreaties and gifts as well as controlled by imitative rites and incantations. Female figurines were moulded in clay or carved in stone or bone by Neolithic societies in Egypt, Syria, Iran, all round the Mediterranean and in South-Eastern Europe. These figurines were undoubtedly the direct ancestresses of the images of admitted goddesses made by historical societies in Mesopotamia, Syria, Greece and other countries.

The Palaeolithic or Old Stone Age of the archaeologists

roughly corresponds to the food-gathering economy which provided the sole source of livelihood during the major period of the early history of mankind. The term 'Neolithic' is exceedingly difficult to define and determine, especially in the Indian context, since the transition from food-gathering to food production was not certainly a uniform and orderly sequence of events. The Neolithic cultures of India do not correspond to a fixed period of time, at least in the economic sense. Therefore, especially in the case of India, greater emphasis should be laid upon the anthropological gradations which may be traced, identified and documented from the life of the surviving tribes and also from the literary records of the advanced peoples.

The surviving tribes of our times have been assigned by the anthropologists to three main categories—*Hunting or Food gathering* (two grades: the higher is distinguished from the lower by the use of bow and arrow); *Pastoral* (two grades: in the higher grade, stock-raising is supplemented by agriculture) and *Agricultural* (three grades: first, garden tillage; second, field tillage and third, agriculture supplemented by stock-raising). The *advanced* pastoral and agricultural grades mark a stage of disintegration in traditional tribal life which is caused by the production of surplus owing to the revolutionary changes in the technique of productions. These categories, however, are neither mutually exclusive nor do they constitute a strict chronological sequence. Hunting and food-gathering are maintained, although with diminishing importance, throughout the pastoral and agricultural grades. The relation between stock-raising and tillage is largely determined by geographical, climatic and other factors.[4]

We have already had occasion to refer to the nature of the cults and rituals of the food-gatherers or hunters. The pastoral tribes require greater courage and hardihood than the agricultural, and also an efficient leadership to protect the cattle. So the cults of heroes and ancestors attain their highest degree of development among the pastorals. The herder in his nomadic life has to live under the scorching heat of the sun, the dreadful thunders, the devastating storms. So his religion is mainly connected with the sky in which astral and nature myths, often personified in secondary gods and godlings, make their appearance. The Supreme Being of the pastoral

religion is generally identified with the sky-god who rules over other deities like the headman of a patriarchal joint family. On the other hand, among the agricultural tribes, the cult of the Mother Earth, conceived as a female deity, is more prominent. Rituals based upon fertility magic must have played a very significant part in the agricultural societies.

> So long as they have pasture, cattle feed and breed of themselves, but by comparison with cattle-raising the work of tilling, sowing and reaping is slow, arduous and uncertain. It requires patience, foresight, faith. Accordingly, agricultural society is characterised by the extensive development of magic.[5]

The magical rites designed to secure the fertility of the fields seemed to belong to the special competence of women who were the first cultivators of the soil and whose power of childbearing had, in primitive thought, a sympathetic effect on the vegetative forces of the earth.[6]

> The fertility of the soil retained its immemorial association with the women who had been the tillers of the earth and were regarded as the depositaries of agricultural magic.[7]

The following beliefs are universal. Women cause the fruits to multiply because they know how to produce children. Whatsoever is sown or planted by a pregnant woman will grow and increase as the foetus in her womb. A sterile woman is injurious to the garden, a barren woman makes the field barren.

Even in the earlier stages of human history, the Mother Goddess was a composite deity. Basically, she was the symbol of generation, the Female Principle, conceived as the actual producer of life. In course of time, however, when the function of the male in the process of generation became recognized, a Male Principle was introduced, evidently as an insignificant lover of the goddess, to play his role as the begetter. With the establishment of husbandry and domestication of animals especially among the pastorals, as well as with the introduction of the cattle-drawn plough, the economic

importance of the males increased further, as a result of which the insignificant male god became co-equal and eventually the predominant partner. But where the transition from hunting and food-gathering to the higher forms of production was marked by an extensive development of primitive agriculture, the function of the life-producing mother was extended to the vegetable kingdom. The Mother Goddess was thus identified with the Mother Earth who became the womb in which the crops were sown. The connection between the growth of agriculture and the origin of the village communities accounts for the resuscitation of her cult as Earth and Corn Mother. All over the world, the earth spirit is generally regarded as female and the presiding deities of agriculture are mainly goddesses, because the idea of fertility and reproduction is connected with women. The idea that the goddess of fertility must herself be fertile obviously led to the conception of the Mother Goddess as the protectress of children. The protectress of children cannot forsake them even in their youth and old age. She has to protect them from diseases and other troubles. That is why all over the world Mother Goddesses have been conspicuously associated with diseases. In this way many other attributes were added to her original conception, making her a composite deity representing the basic facts of human life. With the development of conceptual thought, the attributes and functions, in their turn, also became deified, differentiated and personalized.

MOTHER GODDESS AND THE CULTS AND RITUALS OF FERTILITY

Mallowan is perfectly right when he says that fertility cults connected with the Mother Goddess must be the oldest and longest surviving ingredients in the religions of the ancient world.[8] People of the past instinctively projected their own experiences into the objects around them and thus associated various ideas in order to constitute a practical philosophy of life, making unconscious use of the only principle available to them, viz., the principle of analogy. Thus, they came to the conclusion that natural productivity should be viewed in terms of human productivity, Earth Mother in terms of human mother.

Briffault writes:

> The identification of earth with woman pervades the thought of all stages of culture, and pages could be filled with illustrations of the universal equation. 'The mother and the soil are alike' was a principle of Roman jurisprudence; and the poets express themselves in the same terms as the lawyers. In Ancient India, at the wedding ceremony, the woman is called 'a seed field' and the priests exhorted the bridegroom, saying, 'sow her with thy seed'. 'Your women are the fields', says the *Quran*. The mother's womb and the womb of the earth are forms of the same thing; 'naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked I shall return thither.' The earth is the All-Mother, from her all things are issued, 'for all of earth and all turn to earth again'. 'Hail mother of harvests, Saturn's earth,' sings Vergil, 'hail mighty mother of men.' In words almost identical the rude Germans sang: 'Hail Earth, mother of men'; 'may thou grow in the embrace of God, filled with nourishment for the welfare of men.' In the Vedic hymns, the earth is the mother of man, and he is the son of earth; and in Persian religion man was created out of the earth. In many savage cosmologies the first man arose out of the earth. The word 'Homo' is itself derivative of 'humus'. Although Adam was fashioned out of the earth, Lactantius blames Democritus for believing that men came out of the earth like worms. Lucretius, however, declares that 'animals cannot have fallen from the sky, nor the inhabitants of the earth have issued out of lagoons of salt water; rightly the earth is called 'mother' for out of the earth all things have been created.'[8a]

Briffault has given only two examples from Indian sources regarding the identification of earth with woman. Numerous such examples can be furnished from ancient Indian literature. The word *Kṣetra* (see-field) applies to woman in all cases. In the law book of Manu,[9] man is identified with seed and woman with seed-field: *Kṣetra-bhūtā smṛtā nārī vījabhūtaḥ smṛtaḥ pumān.* This line recurs in most of the Purāṇas and the law books.

The identification of earth with woman implies that the functions of the earth and those of women are alike. The same preconditions which fertilize women are also thought to fertilize

Mother Earth. Here we may refer to a fertility ritual called *ambuvācī* which is observed by the Bengali women on and from the seventh day of the third month of the Hindu calendar. It is believed that during the four days of the said ritual, Mother Earth menstruates in order to prepare herself for her fertilizing work. During this period there is an entire cessation of all ploughing, sowing and other farm work. Widows have to observe a number of taboos since procreation is forbidden to them.

This belief in the common pattern of fertility between women and Mother Earth accounts for the conception of menstruating goddesses in different parts of India. In the Punjab, Mother Earth sleeps for a week in each month.[10] In the Deccan, after the *navarātra*, her temple is closed from the tenth to the full moon day while she rests and refreshes herself.[11] A similar rite of purification is made in the case of the goddess Bhagavatī at her temple in Kerala.[12] In the Malabar region, Mother Earth rests during the hot weather until she gets the first shower of rain.[13] In many parts of India, great importance is attached to the menstruation of the goddess Pārvatī.[11] Reference should also be made in this connection to the menstruation of the goddess Kāmākhyā of Assam.[15]

Aristotle, Pliny and other naturalists believed, wrongly, that the embryo is formed from the blood retained in the uterus after the stoppage of menstruation. The same belief is also found in numerous scattered passages of the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas.[16]

Thomson writes:

> It is important to observe that the magic of human fecundity attaches to the process, not to the result—to the lochial discharge, not to the child itself, and consequently all fluxes of blood, menstrual as well as lochial, are treated alike as manifestations of the life-giving power inherent in the female sex. In primitive thought, menstruation was regarded, quite correctly, as the process of the same nature as childbirth.[17]

In the Tantras, for the same reason, special importance is attached to the menstrual blood. Before the Bhils begin sowing, they set up a stone in the field and smear it with vermilion.[13] As the vermilion stands for menstrual blood, the act of smearing it on the stone implies the infusion of productive energy into

the earth. Most of the figurines of the Mother Goddess from Mohenjodaro are painted over with a red slip or wash. The oldest extant figurines of the Mother Goddess, such as the Venus of Willendorf, are painted red.[19] Some of the Egyptian, Maltese, Cyproite and Danubian figurines are also found ruddled.[20] The relation between red ochre or vermilion with the productive aspects of nature has been shown by Briffault.[21] Red being the fertility symbol representing the menstrual blood is appropriate to the female figurines supposed to represent the Earth or Mother Goddess.

> It is a worldwide custom for menstruating or pregnant women to daub their bodies with red ochre, which serves at once to warn the men away and to enhance their fertility. In many marriage ceremonies the bride's forehead is painted red—a sign that she is forbidden to all men save her husband and a guarantee that she will bear him children.[22]

In many parts of India, married Hindu women, as a rule, use vermilion on their forehead. Widows and virgins cannot use it because they are not entitled to procreate. The bones of the upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic interments are found painted red. This widespread custom clearly has a ritual significance since red is the renewal of life.

> The symbolism becomes quite clear when we find, as we commonly do, that the skeleton has been laid in the contracted or uterine posture. Smeared with the colour of life, curled up like a babe in the womb—what more could the primitive man do to ensure that the soul of the departed would be born again?[23]

The symbolism of red is also clear in the festival of Holi which is a ritual of fertility connected with the theme of death and resurrection.[24]

'So intimate appeared to be the relation between the processes of birth and generation and those of fertility in general that the two aspects of the same "mystery" found very similar modes of ritual expression under prehistoric conditions.'[25] To bring natural productivity under control, the primitive people attached

supreme importance to the human generative organs and employed sexual union, or its imitation, as a means to achieve their end. The rituals of the human generative organs were once widespread, and their relics are still found in the backward countries all over the world.[26] The worship of the phallus was current among the pagan Europeans.[27] Even in the Middle Ages, it was practised in France and Belgium.[28] Pausanias observes that at Cylbene 'the image of Hermes which the people of the place revere is nothing but the male organ of generation erect on the pedestal.'[29] At Syracuse, on the day of Thesmophoria, cakes of sesame and honey representing the female organ were offered to Demeter.[30] At Roman marriages, the bride was required to sit upon the image of Priapus (Mutunnus), the phallic god.[31]

Various phallic symbols representing the goddess and her consort have been found in the ancient tracts of the Aegean, in Egypt and in the land of the Semites. At Mohenjodaro we come across the models of *liṅga* and *yoni* (male and female generative organs) which were probably used as life-bestowing amulets, while at Harappa a number of conical *liṅgas*, representing the male organ, and large undulating rings of stones, thought to symbolise the female principle, have been recorded.[32] The origin of the Tāntric yoni cult is deeply ingrained in this prehistoric substratum of the Hindu religion of the third millenium B.C. The Tāntric *śrīcakra* is nothing but the representation of the female generative organ.[33] The word *Tantra* is derived from the root *tan* meaning 'to spread', 'to multiply'. Tāntric rituals are older than the Tāntric texts themselves. Their original purpose was to increase productivity, both natural and human. Primarily, the *liṅga* was the symbol of the act of cultivation while the *yoni* represented Mother Earth. This finds support in a statement of Manu: *iyam bhūmirhi bhūtānāṃ śāśvatī yonirucyate.*[34] The primitive hoe was designed to resemble the male organ; the word *lāṅgala* (plough) is closely associated with *liṅga*.[35]

Reference should be made in this connection to the Greek Thesmophoria, celebrated only by women in honour of the two *thesmophoroi*, i.e., law-bringing goddesses, Demeter and Persephone. At the bottom of the festival was the memory of Demeter who was not only the inventress of agriculture but also a guiding deity of marriage and procreation. Sowing and begetting children being identical among the Greeks in

conception and linguistic usage, the festival was celebrated in the month of sowing, called in Crete and Sicily 'thesmophoris', in Boeotia 'damatrios', in Attica 'Pyanepsion', corresponding more or less to our October. According to Herodotus, this festival had already been widespread among the original population of Greece, was common throughout Hellas, and extended to the most distant colonies of Thrace, Sicily, Asia Minor, and on the shores of the Black Sea.[36]

The festival was marked by indiscriminate sexual intercourse.[37] The union of Cybele and Attis, like that of Aphrodite and Adonis or Ishtar and Tammuj was marked by sex festivals. The union of Demeter and Zeus, was imitated by men and women in the sex festivals at Eleusis in order 'to make the fields wave with yellow corns'. Frazer says:

> We may therefore conclude that a great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature, was worshipped under different names but with substantial similarity of myth and ritual by many peoples of Western Asia; that associated with her was a lover, or rather a series of lovers, divine yet mortal, with whom she mated year by year, their commerce being deemed essential to the propagation of animals and plants, each in their several kind; and further, the fabulous union of the divine pair was stimulated and, as it were, multiplied on earth by the real, though temporary, union of the human sexes at the sanctuary of the goddess for the sake of thereby ensuring the fruitfulness of the ground and the increase of men and beast.[38]

Frazer's interpretation helps us to understand the significance of religious prostitution, which was once current in different parts of the world. At Babylon, every woman was bound at least once in her life to dedicate her body to a stranger in the temple of the goddess Mylitta.[39] Girls of Cyprus prostituted themselves before marriage and spent a portion of their income as an offering to Venus for the preservation of their chastity in time to come.[40] Religious prostitution was current among the women of Heliopolis or Baalbec in Syria and also in the temple of Aphrodite at Corinth and in many parts of Western Asia. Among the Armenians, the goddess Anaitis was worshipped with sacred

prostitution even by damsels belonging to the highest families.[12] In a Lydian inscription, belonging to the second century, found at Trallies, we find a lady called Aurelia Aemilia declaring with pride that she had prostituted herself in the temple service in the same manner as her mother and grandmother had done.[13] In the epic of *Gilgamesh*, Ishtar is represented as gathering round her unchaste girls and harlots, and as a goddess of prostitution the epithet 'consecrated' is applied to her.[14] Lactantius says that Aphrodite or Venus, who is generally identified with Isthar or Astarte, instituted the art of courtesanship and taught women in Cyprus to seek gain by prostitution, which she commanded for the purpose that she alone might not appear unchaste.[15] In the Biblical literature, religious prostitution is mentioned in connection with the Mother Goddess cult.[16] In India, the Goddess Sarasvatī is worshipped especially by the prostitutes. Even today the 'sacred earth' of a prostitute's residence is required in the worship of the great goddess Durgā.

The sacred prostitution practised in various parts of the ancient world was therefore a custom based upon some objective understanding, a custom quite in accordance with the primitive belief in the identical relation of Earth and Woman. The association of sexual union with agriculture was universal among the backward tribes all over the world, copious illustrations of which have been furnished by Frazer[17] and Briffault.[18] This holds also in the case of India. Long ago, Crooke[19] pointed out that Holi was a fertility rite in which sexual commerce had a significant part to play. This has been supported by subsequent researches.[50] The Bihu festival of Assam[51] and the Magh Porai of Orissa[52] bear significant relics of sex rites. The agricultural rites are saturated with sexual elements among the Naga tribes of Manipur,[53] the Hos of Chotanagpur,[54] the Punjas of Jaypore,[55] the Kotas of the Nilgiri hills,[56] the Santals of Bengal and Bihar[57] and among many other tribes and castes of India.

These customs did not cease to exist completely in comparatively advanced societies. Thus in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* we come across numerous passages in which sexual union is identified with sacrifice.[58] The conception of 'productive pairs'[59] and 'fruitful semen' occur in many passages.[60] The Aśvamedha sacrifice, which was originally an agricultural ritual,[61] frankly demanded the queen's sexual union with the priest.[62] The

Vājapeya or the sacrifice of food and drink also contains sexual elements, the presiding deity of which is a Mother Goddess.[63] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[64] says that the lower portion (*upastha*) of a woman is to be conceived as the sacrificial altar (*Vedi*), the pubic hairs (*lomāni*) as the sacrificial grass, the outerskin (*bahirścarman*) as the floor for the pressing of the soma plants (*adhiṣavana*), and the two labia of the vulva (*muskau*) as the inmost fire. He who remembers this during copulation gets the reward of the Vājapeya sacrifice. The same text goes on so far as to state that, if a woman refuses sexual union, she must be forced to do so.[65] In many scattered passages of the Upaniṣads, the woman is conceived as the sacrificial fire, her lower portion as the sacrificial wood, the genitalia as the flames, the penetration as the carbon and the sexual union as the spark.[66] In the Vāmadevya Sāman of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*,[67] we come across the following:

> One summons: that is a *himkāra*. He makes request: that is a *prastāva*. Together with a woman he lies down; that is an *udgītha*. He lies upon the woman; that is a *pratihāra*. He comes to an end; that is a *nidhāna*. He comes to a finish; that is a *nidhāna*. This is the Vāmdevya Sāman as woven upon copulation. He who knows thus this Vāmdevya Sāman as woven upon copulation, comes to copulation, reaches a full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring and cattle, great in fame. One should never abstain from any woman. That is the rule.[68]

In Tantricism, special importance is attached to the rituals centring round the female genital organ; these rituals are called *bhaga-yāga* or *latā-sādhanā*. We have already noted that the Tantric *Yantras* are nothing but the representations of the female organ. In the central ritual of the Durgā worship, a *Yantra* called *sarvatobhadramaṇḍala*, showing the female generative organ, is drawn upon the ground. Then a *pūrṇaghaṭa* or *pūrṇakumbha*, i.e., an earthen vessel filled with water, symbolizing the female womb, is placed on the diagram. The figure of a baby called *sinduraputtali* is drawn on the surface of the vessel. The open mouth of the *pūrṇaghaṭa* is covered with five kinds of leaves, and a coconut, smeared with

vermilion, is placed on it. It is a simple fertility rite by which the plants are brought into contact with the female reproductive organ, evidently to ensure multiplication.[69]

That the main purpose of the *yantra* and *pūrṇaghaṭa*, referred to previously, is to identify natural fertility with human fertility, so that the productivity of nature becomes increased by the imitation of female reproductivity, finds a nice expression in a piece of sculpture of the Mother Goddess found at Nagarjunakonda. It depicts the lower portion of a female figure in a sitting posture with legs doubled up and wide apart and feet pointing outwards. The bifurcated lower portion of the vulva is very prominently indicated, while the area between the broad belt below the navel and the upper portion of the vulva is used to make a *pūrṇaghaṭa* highly decorated with an ornamental belt around it.[70] In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,[71] *ghaṭa* or *kumbha* is equated with the womb of the Mother Goddess, if not with the Mother Goddess herself. The *Kathā-saritsāgara*[72] identifies it explicitly with the uterus.

The equivalence may explain why the *navarātra* 'nine-night' fertility festival to all Mother Goddesses begins on the first of Āśvina by establishing a fertility jar.[73]

MOTHER GODDESS AND AGRICULTURAL MYTHS

The conception of the Earth Mother is as varied as the degrees of culture attained by separated communities of mankind, and in this connection we should refer especially to the Mother Goddesses of different regions. The religion of the Mother Goddess existed until the dawn of civilization and even later in different parts of the world. Figurines from Knossos include all the principal types of the Mother Goddesses found in South-East Europe and the Aegean basin.[74] Apart from the Cretan centre of the Mother Goddess cult, there was another centre at Malta where female figurines of West Asiatic type, with marked sexual features are found in large numbers.[75]

The Cretan Mother Goddess, who was later equated with Rhea, was the embodiment of the qualities that were later

specialized by such Greek goddesses as Gaea, Demeter, Artemis, Aphrodite and others, and it is also possible that she was originally identified with the pre-Hellenic Athena and Artemis and the Phrygian Cybele.[76] The Cretan claim to have been the breeding spot of the Phrygian mysteries of the Great Mother Cybele cannot be lightly dismissed.[77] The symbols of the Cretan Mother Goddess were the snake, dove, double axe, horns of consecration, obese figurines, mountain, tree or pillar. In her original form she was the Earth Mother, the goddess of vegetation. In a group of Minoan-Mycenean signet rings, the vegetation cycle is represented in a series of cult scenes portraying the Mother Goddess in a variety of settings. We may refer in this connection to the Vaphio signet, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in which the 'dying god and the mourning goddess theme' is depicted. As James points out:

> In the Minoan-Mycenean religion the figures of gods are of very infrequent occurrence while those of the goddesses abound. Indeed everywhere that of universal mother, lying behind various emblems and localizations of maternity, predominates, representing the mystery of birth and generation in its manifold aspects and attributes. But closely associated with the goddess was the young male god as her brother, spouse or son, brought together in a nuptial ritual in relation to the annual cycle of vegetation in the agricultural calendrical sequence in which the king and the queen were cast to play the leading roles, either in a divine capacity, as in Egypt, or as servants of the goddess, as in Mesopotamia.[78]

The Cretan Zeus represented the process of the fecundity on earth, being the son and consort of Rhea; the Hellenistic Sky God of the same name is a syncretistic product.[79] The story of the annual death and resurrection of the god recurs in all agricultural mythologies, which is suggestive of the death and revival of plant life in the annual cycle of seasons. According to the originally oriental myth, Adonis, a god whose beauty was proverbial, the favourite of Aphrodite, was slain by a boar while hunting. He was passionately mourned by the goddess. At last Zeus consented to his returning to her for a

short time once a year. In Greece this was symbolized by a festival called *Adonia* which took place in the month of Munychion (April-May). On the first day, his disappearance was lamented while on the second, joy and exultation at his return prevailed. The festival was especially celebrated by women. Images of Adonis and Aphrodite were exhibited or carried round. Lamentations for his death and rejoicings for his return were sung.[80]

The story of the death and revival of Attis, the young lover of the goddess Cybele for whose sake he castrated himself in a frenzy, reflects the annual birth and death of corns which he personated.[81] In the myth of Osiris we also come across 'the dying god and the mourning goddess' theme, Osiris being the spirit of fertility dying to rise again. He represented plant life, and also probably the fructifying waters of the Nile, and his sister-wife Isis personified the cultivable earth.[82]

The Mesopotamian Mother Goddess was known to the Sumerians as Inanna, and her consort was Dumuzi, who was her son. In later Babylonian religion, Inanna was simply transformed into the great goddess Ishtar, and Dumuzi became Tammuz. From the Tammuz ritual texts it would seem that Ishtar descended into the underworld to seek her lover. By order of Allatu, the queen of the underworld, she was stripped of her dress and ornaments at each of the seven gates, and then struck with disease. In the absence of Ishtar the earth did not yield any fruit and so the god Ea created Uddushu-namir and sent him to *Aralu* (the underworld) to bring her back. Allatu was compelled to release Ishtar. She was led back and at each gate her clothing and ornaments were restored to her. Ishtar must have rescued Tammuz since his restoration was annually celebrated in rituals.[83] The recovery of Tammuz by Ishtar is also suggested by the fact that there is a Greek myth telling how Aphrodite (Ishtar) went down to Hades to redeem Adonis (Tammuz) from Persephone.

In the drama of the death and resurrection of vegetation, it was the goddess who was the dominant force in the act of renewal. The young god would die in the rotation of seasons and would be rescued by the goddess, the ultimate source of regeneration. This theme is found in the Egyptian myths of Isis and Osiris. Isis taught her husband-brother the secrets

of agriculture and sent him on his civilizing mission. Osiris was assassinated by his wicked brother Set and his body was thrown into the river Nile. Isis set out in search of the body of Osiris and was able to collect his dismembered body. The story of her quest for the mortal remains of her murdered husband is the same as that of Demeter for her daughter. Osiris, however, was revived through his son, the young god Horus.

The same drama of the death and resurrection of vegetation, symbolized by the death of the young lover of the goddess and his revival through her efforts, also characterizes the myths of Rhea-Cybele. In Phrygia, the cult of Rhea-Cybele chiefly flourished in the city of Pessinus on the river Sangarius. Like Durgā, she was the Corn Mother as well as the goddess of war, and her vehicle was a lion. Her oldest sanctuary lay on a rock named Agdos near the grave of Attis, her son and lover. According to the legend recorded by Pausanias,[84] when Attis died, his spirit passed into a fig tree which the goddess Agdistis (Rhea-Cybele) carried into her cave for ever. The cult of Cybele came to Rome in the beginning of the second century B.C. According to Dionysus of Halicarnassus,[85] every year the praetors conducted sacrifices and games in her honour. She was also honoured by theatrical shows which became a regular institution in Rome under the name *Ludi Megalenses*.

But a more specialised Corn Mother is met with in the conception of Demeter and her daughter Kore Persephone. The Pre-Hellenic character of this goddess is marked by the fact that Diodorus Siculus refers to the Cretans as the people who introduced the mysteries of Demeter, and that the mysteries from Egypt, i.e., those of Isis and Osiris, were same as those of Demeter and Dionysus.[86] We have already referred to the 'dying god and the mourning goddess' theme in connection with the myths of Isis and Osiris, Ishtar and Tammuz, Cybele and Attis. In the Baal-Anat mythical cycle of the Palestinean region, we find that like Tammuz, the god Baal had fallen a victim of death. With the help of the Sun-Goddess, his consort Anat took his corpse back and buried it. Like Isis, she set out in search of the murderer of Baal, who was his brother Mot (meaning death) a counterpart of the Egyptian Set. Having found him, she killed him, chopped his body into

pieces, reduced the fragments into dust like flour, and spread them over the fields. Then Baal was restored to life again and vegetation revived. According to the myth of Demeter, one day while her daughter Persephone was wandering, the earth opened suddenly, and Pluto, god of Hades, forcibly carried her off. When this was heard by Demeter, she withdrew herself from Olympus and also cast a blight upon the earth as a result of which no barley grew, nor did trees yield fruit. The goddess then retired to Eleusia where the king Celeus received her cordially and she became the nurse of his sons Triptolemus and Demophon. She desired to make Demophon immortal, and put him one night into a fire. But his real mother screamed aloud as a result of which the spell was broken, and the boy perished. Demeter, however, made up for the loss by instructing the other son in the art of agriculture. This part of her myth is same as that of Isis. Meanwhile the blight remained upon the earth, and mankind was perishing from famine. Therefore a compromise between the parties was arranged and Zeus declared that Persephone should spend one-third of each year of earth with her mother, and the remaining two-thirds with Pluto.

According to Sir James Frazer,[87] the myth reveals that Demeter and Persephone are personifications of Corn. The former is the ripe corn and the latter, the seed corn. Persephone's stay in the underworld is certainly suggestive of the seedcorn staying under the earth. Referring to the festival of Demeter, Herodotus writes: 'It is in the honour of Isis, who is called in Greek tongue Demeter.'[88] Diodorus Siculus attributes the discovery of barley to Isis and refers to her festival in which stalks of grain were carried in procession.[89] Augustine says that Isis made the discovery of barley, and that is why the Romans identified her with Ceres, the Roman Demeter.[90] Tertullian says that Isis wore a wreath of corn which she had discovered.[91] Now, it should be pointed out that the prefix *deai* of Demeter was the Cretan word for 'barley' and the goddess was thus the 'barley-mother'. *Deai* also denotes 'earth'.

The Earth Mothers, Demeter and Persephone, were distinct personalities, yet in function and idea identical. So need was felt to define their relations,

> They might be explained as sisters, but as there was a male deity in the background, and Demeter's name spoke of maternity, it was natural to regard them as mother and daughter.[92]

It appears that Kore and Persephone were amalgamated into one and that she was made responsible for sending up new crops from the underground by her annual return from the nether regions. This gave the earlier agricultural rites a deeper meaning, associating them with the death and resurrection theme. In the month of Boedromion (September-October) the Eleusiana took place. It was a mystic ceremony of initiation performed during the festival of Demeter. The idea of the dying away and subsequent revival of the seed-grain which had its mythical counterpart in the story of Persephone abducted by Pluto in the underworld developed into a secret cult, into which persons were initiated through special mysterious usages, the secrets of which no one was allowed to reveal. On the sixth day a great festal procession started from Athens to Eleusis (about nine miles). Thousands took part in it, crowned with ivy and myrtle, carrying in their hands torches, agricultural implements, and ears of corn. The purpose of the mysteries was to infuse the spirit of Persephone's joyful resurrection into the hearts of the young initiates.[93]

So far as the Indian agricultural myths are concerned, we may begin with the Earth Goddess of the Harappa culture. The archaeological suggestivity of her attributes and functions may be explained in terms of later Indian mythologies. In a passage of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[94] the goddess says:

> Next O Ye gods, I shall support the whole world with the life sustaining vegetables which shall grow out of my own body during a period of heavy rain. I shall gain fame on earth then as Śākambharī.

Thus the goddess is no other than Mother Earth from whose body grow the life-sustaining vegetables. In this connection we may refer to a seal unearthed at Harappa which, on the obverse, shows a nude female figure, head downwards and legs stretched out upwards, with a plant issuing out of her womb.[95] This may

be regarded as the prototype of the aforesaid Earth Mother Śākambharī. This goddess stood by herself, as there is evidence to demonstrate, as an independent goddess of antiquity, though the narrators of the later Purāṇas knew her only as a form of the great goddess (the supreme being of the Śāktas) into whom she was absorbed.[96] On the reverse of the seal mentioned, we find a female figure with dishevelled hair and arms raised up in alarm, and a male figure standing in front of her in a threatening attitude with a shield-like object in one hand and a sickle-like object in the other. Marshall suggests that the scene is intended to portray a human sacrifice connected with the Earth Goddess depicted on the other side. The association of the Earth Goddess with the vegetative forces of nature is not confined only to the said 'Śākambharī-seal'. There are many others in which trees and plants are associated with the goddess. In one such seal the goddess stands between the bifurcated branches of a *pipal* tree in front of which appears a half-kneeling worshipper behind whom stands a goat with a human face, and in the lower section there are seven persons dressed in short kilt and wearing long pigtails.[97]

Since cultivation was not the predominant mode of food production of earlier Vedic tribes, we find no great Earth Mother in the *Ṛgveda*, although heaven and earth are described there as universal parents. In the *Atharvaveda*[98] we have a beautiful hymn dedicated to Mother Earth, while in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[99] we come across a description of the marriage of heaven and earth. This is a mythology of a different type, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter in which female divinities of the Vedic texts will be dealt with in detail. The conception of a Sky Father fertilizing the Earth Mother is, however, met with in a number of mythologies. In a Greek magic formula of the first century A.D., the sky is invoked to rain and the earth to conceive and yield. This formula, as Farnell points out, 'savours of a very primitive liturgy that closely resembles the famous Dodenaean invocation to Zeus, the Sky God and Mother Earth; and it belongs to that part of the Eleusian ritual *Quoḍ ad frumentum attinet*.'[100]

It is in the *Mahābhārata*[101] that for the first time Mother Earth is brought in relation to Viṣṇu and in course of time, she becomes his consort. It is said that when Mother Earth became

burdened with excessive pressure of population, she sank down a hundred *Yojanas* and sought the protection of Viṣṇu. Thereupon Viṣṇu took the shape of a boar and lifted her to her own place. A legend in the *Bralmapurāṇa*[102] represents Narakāsura as sprung from the union of Viṣṇu in his boar form with the goddess Mahī or Chāyā, identified with Mother Earth. In this connection it should be pointed out that the offspring of the union of the boar-god and the earth is an *Asura* which points to the influence of the non-Indian Asura Civilizations on such conceptions.

The corn-god Adonis and his Phrygian counterpart Attis (in his Hellenized conception) were killed by a boar. Pigs were sacred to the Egyptian Osiris,[103] and the worshippers of Attis, specially the people of Pessinus, abstained from eating swine.[104] At Commana in Pontus, the seat of the goddess Ma, pork was not eaten and swine were not even brought into the city.[105] The pork taboo of the Muhammedans may be a relic of a similar archaic belief. The manner in which a boar gathers food resembles that of ploughing. Referring to the Egyptian system of agriculture, Herodotus writes:

> When the river (the Nile) has come to its own accord and irrigated the fields, and having regulated them has subsided, then each man sows his own land and turns swine into it, and when the seed has been trodden in by the swine, he waits for the harvest.[106]

Cherry writes in this connection:

> To imitate the hoof prints by means of a stick would be an easy matter, and if some tradition about the connection between swine and a good harvest has come down the ages, it may have given rise to the strange idea of the pig being regularly thought as part of the fertility of the land, and becoming sacred to the Great Mother.[107]

The myth associating Mother Earth with the boar form of Viṣṇu may thus be a development of an older myth evolving from analogical experiences. The association is found in many places. The *dhyāna* (meditative conception) of Viṣṇu describes

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him as *Indirā-Vasumatī-samśobhi-pārśva-dvaya*. The early Cālukya kings, who apparently claimed themselves to be incarnations of Viṣṇu used the title *Śrī-pṛthivī-vallabha*.[108] The earth (Bhū, Pṛthivī, Vasumatī), called Vaiṣṇavī, was conceived as the wife of Viṣṇu in many land grants. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[109] Earth is variously designated as Medini, Mādhavī, Dharaṇī, etc. Bhū or Mother Earth, identified with Vaiṣṇavi in the *Mahābhārata* and traditionally regarded as the second wife of Viṣṇu, appears again in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[110]

But the typical goddess of agriculture, as we find in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is its heroine Sītā. She and her consort Rāma are worshipped everywhere in Northern India. In fact they are the most popular deities. It is generally held that Rāma and Sītā became so popular in the Indian mind that they became deified human beings and objects of extensive worship. But the fact is just the reverse. Rāma and Sītā are not deified human beings, but gods conceived in human forms. In the Vedas,[111] Sītā is purely an agricultural deity, meaning the furrow which bears crops for men. The word Rāma is derived from the root *ram* meaning the act of ploughing and also that of sexual intercourse. In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya[112] Sītā is conceived as residing in seeds and plants. Referring to the vegetative aspects of the Mother Goddess, the *Harivamśa* says that she is Sītā to the ploughmen.[113] In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā is said to have sprung from Mother Earth and in the end she disappears again into her womb.[114] The similarity of the Demeter-Persephone myth with the main story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is too striking to be ignored. The heroine of the epic is born of a field furrow, abducted by a Pluto of the underworld, and after all her adventures she returns to the earth. The story of the quest of Sītā by Rāma resembles that of Demeter's quest for Persephone or that of the quest of Isis for the body of Osiris. The myths of Rāma and Sītā were probably more than one, because we have other versions of them, apart from the one found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, Sītā is the sister-consort of Rāma which reminds us of the relation between Osiris and Isis. There are indeed grounds to suppose that the myths of Rāma and Sītā developed from primitive agricultural rituals, and one such myth was rendered into the form of an epic by the great poet Vālmīki.

MOTHER GODDESS AND FEMALE-DOMINATED SOCIETIES

'Female deities', writes Starbuck, 'have often enjoyed the highest place among the gods. This depends upon the nature of the social organisation and the respect in which women are held. Clan life in which the mother is the head of the group is likely to lift the Mother Goddess into a supreme position.'[115] According to E.O. James:

> Whether or not this reflects a primeval system of matriarchal social organization, as is by no means improbable, the fact remains that the Goddess at first had precedence over the young God with whom she was associated as her son or husband or lover. A number of causes may have contributed to her enhanced status in society and in the pantheon, but the starting point in the institution of the family and its wider ramifications in kinship can hardly have been other than the relationship of mother and child in the first instance. That an infant is the offspring of its mother could never be in doubt, however its origin and generation may have been explained, if, indeed, there was any speculation on the subject in its physical aspects. The role of the father might be very obscure and even non-existent, but that of the mother was not open to question, being merely a matter of observation. . . Woman with her inexplicable nature and unaccountable attributes and functions, such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation, has been a mysterious person, calling forth a numinous reaction and evaluation, permeated with religious sentiments, rendering her at once sacred and tabu. Regarded as the sole source of the family, the paternal instinct doubtless from the first was primarily female, descent invariably following the distaff. This probably explains to a considerable extent the priority of mother-right in primitive society, sometimes as a unilateral organization in which woman may have remained among her own people and the husband was little more than a visitor and stranger in her kin. The mother alone then became the fountain-head and the self-sufficing source of the family, and by implication the personification of the principle of life.[116]

The superiority of the goddesses over the gods and priestesses over the priests can thus reasonably be explained in terms of a social system in which maternity counts more than paternity, descent is traced and property handed down through women rather than through men. From an economic viewpoint the following may as well be said:

> In the pre-hunting stage there was no production, only simple appropriation of seeds, fruits and small animals, and therefore there can have been no division of labour at all. With the invention of spear, however, hunting became the men's task, while the women continued the work of food-gathering. This division is universal among hunting tribes, and it was doubtless dictated in the first instance by the relative immobility of mothers. Hunting led to the domestication of animals, and accordingly cattle-raising is normally men's work. On the other hand, the work of food-gathering, maintained, as we have seen, by the women, led to the cultivation of seeds in the vicinity of the tribal settlement; and accordingly garden tillage is almost universally women's work. Finally, when garden tillage had given place to field tillage and the hoe to the cattle-drawn plough, the work of agriculture was transferred to the men. These ever-shifting tensions between the sexes correspond to the gradual transition from matrilineal to patrilineal descent.[117]

This has been explained by Bernal as follows:

> As grain gathering was women's business, agriculture was probably women's invention, and in any case women's work, at least till the invention of the ox-drawn hoe or plough, for it was done with the hoe, a derivative of the stone age digging stick with which women used to grub for roots. Where agriculture predominated over hunting in providing food it accordingly raised the status of women and halted and reversed the tendency to change the reckoning of descent through the mother to that through the father which hunting at first induced. Only where stock-raising predominated, as in the lands bordering the agricultural settlements, there was

> a complete transition to the patriarchy—as we see it in the *Bible*.[118]

The accumulation of wealth occurred in primitive societies in two ways: (i) by the development of agriculture and (ii) by the domestication of animals. Where agriculture developed considerably without any intervening pastoral stage, mother-right elements became the driving forces of society.

> This has been the case in North America, where no domestication of animals has taken place, and, most conspicuously among those tribes, such as the Iroquois and the Pueblos, in which agriculture attained in the hands of women an important development. Similarly the matriarchal order is found persisting among the peoples of Indonesia and Micronesia, where the culture of rice and paddy supply the staple means of subsistence and pastoral conditions have not existed. The matriarchal character of society has been preserved among many African tribes who have remained chiefly agricultural. This happened notably in Egypt, which owed its wealth and culture to the Nile and to the fields which it fertilised, and where pastoral property never attained any degree of importance.[119]

Elsewhere the stage of highly developed agriculture was reached only after passing through a purely pastoral phase of long duration, as with the Ṛgvedic tribes of India.[120] Where agriculture developed in its most productive form in the societies which was originally pastoral, we have the opposite result. Instead of raising the economic power and importance of the earth-cultivating women, it gave rise to the most pronounced type of patriarchal societies. The religion of the *Ṛgveda* is therefore patriarchal, a reflection of the society of pastoral warriors. The Ṛgvedic tribes 'never took up cultivation of the soil, leaving it to the native inhabitants; and, instead, they, like all pastoral warriors, profoundly despised agriculture as the occupation of the conquered races'.[121] One should not fail to recall in this connection that the laws of Manu expressly forbid agricultural work to members of Brahmanical and warrior castes.[122] Since

cultivation was not the predominant mode of food production of the Ṛgvedic tribes, we find no great Earth Mother in the *Ṛgveda* in which she is invoked only once.[123] Here, although she is addressed as the mother and substance of all things and invoked in company of the sky to grant blessings, her conception admits of a totally different explanation since she is a figure quite distinct from the Earth or Mother Goddess of the older peoples. Goddesses occupy a subordinate position in Vedic religion. As wives of the great gods they play a still more insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods with little independent power.[124] Even the so-called important goddesses like Aditi and Uṣas have no insignificance in subsequent religious history. We do not find in the earlier strata of the Vedic literature the names of such Purāṇic goddesses as Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā, Umā and others.

That the cult of the Indian Mother Goddess might have some bearing on the principles of mother-right was held by a number of scholars,[125] but it was R.P. Chanda who asserted categorically that such cults arose in India under the same social conditions as those under which Astarte was conceived in Syria, Cybele in Phrygia and Isis in Egypt:

> There is a large body of evidence to show that the Semites before their separation passed through a matriarchal form of society. . . . All those traits which are the oldest and most permanent in the character of Astarte-Ishtar are those which for other reasons we must predicate of the ancient Semitic tribal mother.[126]

Among the Semites of antiquity, traces of an older system of mother-right appear to have long survived in the sphere of religion.

> In later times father-kin had certainly displaced mother-kin among the Semitic worshippers of Astarte, and probably the same change had taken place among the Phrygian worshippers of Cybele. Yet the older custom lingered in Lycia down to the historical period; and we may conjecture that in former times it was widely spread through Asia Minor.[127]

But father-right elements gradually encroached upon the matters of descent and property in these countries and this brought a significant change in the field of religion.

> In old Arabian religion gods and goddesses occur in pairs, the goddess being the greater, so that the god cannot be her Baal, that the goddess is often a mother without being a wife, and the god her son, and that the progress of things was towards, changing goddesses into gods or lowering them beneath the male deity.[128]

Frazer shows that in Egypt the archaic system of mother-right lasted down to Roman times.

> The union of Osiris with his sister Isis was not a freak of the story-teller's fancy: it reflected a social system which was itself based upon practical consideration of the most solid kind. When we reflect that this practice of mother-kin as opposed to father-kin survived down to the latest times of antiquity, not in an obscure or barbarous tribe, but in a nation whose immemorial civilization was its glory and the wonder of the world, we may, without being extravagant, suppose that a similar practice formerly prevailed in Syria and Phrygia, and that it accounts for the superiority of the goddess over the god in the divine partnership of Adonis and Astarte, of Attis and Cybele.[129]

According to the Egyptian legends, Osiris received the Corn-seeds from Isis, which suggests that, among the Great Mother-worshipping peoples it was believed that agricultural civilizations had a female origin. As in Egypt, we can trace in Babylonia the early belief that life in the universe had a female origin.[130] The worship of Mother Earth which later developed into that of the all-pervading Mother-Goddess was thus a feature of agricultural civilizations. When the pastoral-patriarchal warriors invaded the dominions of the Mother-worshipping peoples, they introduced their strongly individualistic gods, but could not altogether eliminate the cult of the Mother Goddess. As Farnell rightly observes:

> The Aryan Hellenes were able to plant their Zeus and Poseidon on the high hill of Athens, but not to overthrow the supremacy of Athena in the Central shrine and in the aboriginal soul of the Athenian people.[131]

The Vedic tribes of India were worshippers of father-gods, but they could not annihilate the pre-Vedic Earth Mother, and so the goddess Pṛthivī was allowed to remain in the Vedic pantheon, but in a less glorious position in contrast to her male consort Dyaus, the sky Father. In Egypt, the glory of Osiris superseded that of Isis, but the latter could not be wiped out. Instead, she found her cult extensively widespread among peoples outside Egypt. The patriarchal Teutons also tried to discredit the indigenous Earth Mothers. They were conceived as demonesses, as we find in the case of Thor's mother, the giantess Jordh.

In 1916, six years before the dramatic discovery of Mohenjodaro, Chanda wrote:

> For the conception of the godhead analogous to that of the Śākta conception of the Devī we should travel beyond the countries dominated by the Vedic Aryans and the Avestic Iranians to Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean. There is a strong resemblance between the Indian Śākta conception of Śakti and the Śākta ritual of the followers of Vāmācāra and Kulācāra, who practised ceremonial promiscuity on the one hand, and the Semitic conception of Ashtart, the Egyptian conception of Isis and the Phrygian conception of Cybele, on the other.[132]

In the Śākta scheme of cosmogonical evolution, the unmanifested *Prakṛti* alone existed before creation. She wished to create, and having assumed the form of the Great Mother, she created Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva out of her own body. Referring to the Mother Goddess cult of Mohenjodaro, Marshall rightly observes that, in the later Śākta phase of the primitive Mother Goddess cult, the Devī is transformed into the eternally existing all-powerful Female Principle, the *Prakṛti* or Śakti, and having associated with the male principle, the

puruṣa, she becomes Jagadambā or Jagamātā, the mother of the universe, the creator of the gods. In her highest form she is Mahādevī, the consort of Śiva, but in spite of her being consort of the latter, she is his creator.[133]

In Asia Minor and round the shores of the Mediterranean are found many examples of Mother Goddess with a young subordinate god by her side.

In Punic Africa she is Tanit with her son; in Egypt, Isis with Horus; in Phoenicia, Ashtaroth with Tammuz (Adonis); in Asia Minor, Cybele with Attis; in Greece (and especially in the Greek Crete itself) Rhea with young Zeus. Everywhere she is unwed, but made the mother first of her companion by immaculate conception, and then of the gods and of all life by the embrace of her own son. In memory of these original facts her cult (especially the most esoteric mysteries of it) are marked by various practices and observances symbolic to the negation of true marriage and obliteration of sex.[134]

Such stories of Virgin Goddesses are relics of an age when the father had no significance at all, and of a society in which a man's contribution to the matter of procreation was hardly recognised.[135]

Notes

1. James, *CMG*, 11, 22.
2. Macalister, *TEA*, I. 502.
3. Cf. Piggott, *PI*, 127.
4. Hobhouse, Wheeler and Ginsberg, *MCSISP*, 16 ff.
5. Thomson, *AA*, 21-22.
6. Frazer, *GB* (ab), 11-82, 399-423 ; Briffault, *M*, III. 48 ff. In Ancient Greece agricultural magic was the monopoly of women (Farnell, *CGS* V. 180 ff). Men were excluded from the agricultural rites, which took place in October at the time of seed-sowing. The term 'thesmophoria' appears to have been loosely used for all agricultural rites of Greece. All other Attic festivals of agriculture and fertility, such as 'aretophoria', 'sthenia', 'haloa', 'skira', etc., were likewise celebrated by women (Harrison, *PSGR*, 131, 134, 146). The rites of Dionysos

were confined exclusively among women. At Pyreai, in the temples of Dionysos, Demeter and Kore (Persephone), women alone were allowed to enter. At Briseai in Laconia it was the women who performed the rites of Dionysos in secrecy. At Pellene, men were admitted during the first three days of the nine-day festival of Demeter. The priestess of Demeter occupied a special throne of honour at the Olympic games. At Halicarnassus, she was termed also the priestess of Demos (Herodotus, VII. 178; Pausanias, III. 20; VI. 20; VII. 27; VIII. 48; IX. 20; *Cf.* Paton and Myres in *JHS*, XVI. 217). In Babylonia and Assyria women were inspired prophetesses of the god. None but a woman was allowed to enter the secret cave of Bel-Marduk (Sayce, *RAEB*, 455, 466). In ancient Egypt, the queen was the High priestess of Ra, and at the time of New Empire, there was scarcely a woman from the highest to the lowest who was not connected with the service of temples (Erman, *LAE*, 295).

7. Briffault, M, III. 117.
8. *I*, II. 87.

8a. *M*, III. 56 f.

9. IX. 33.
10. *NINQ*, II. 172; *PNQ*, II. 205.
11. Underhill, *HRY*, 34.
12. Nagam Aiya, *TSM*, II. 89 ff.
13. Iyer, *CTC*, II. 78.
14. *IA*, XVIII. 155 ff.
15. Kāmarūpa is associated with the *Yoni* (sexual organ) of Satī, and the presiding goddess of the *Pīṭha* (holy resort) is Kāmākhyā. The name of the goddess may be traced to the Austric words *Kamoi* (demon), *Kamoit* (devil), *Komin* (grave), *Kamet* (corpse), *Kamru* (name of a god), etc. See *AT*, Oct. 22, 1957. It also recalls the Khasi *Ka-Mei-Kha* which is the name of the Mother Goddess. The worship of the goddess is said to have been introduced by the Asura Naraka, king of Kāmarūpa, See *Kālikāpurāṇa*, Chs. 38-39, 42-45. There is no image in her temple. Only a *Yoni*-shaped stone is set up to represent the goddess. The temple is open to the visits of foreigners. But its rituals are not, even now, very accurately known to the uninitiated. During the new-moon week the shrine is closed to all because it is believed, that is the period during which the goddess is unclean for her menstruation. Conversely, the Brahmaputra which flows under the shrine is ceremonially impure throughout the year, except on the annual bathing festival of the Aśokāṣṭamī, when ablution in the water becomes as cleansing as bathing in the Mother Ganges herself.
16. For details about menstrual beliefs and rituals see my *IPR*, 8-19.
17. *SAGS*, I, 206.
18. Crooke, *RFNI*, 250.
19. Macalister, *TEA*, I. 447; Burkitt, *P*, 222; Childe, *DEC*, 175.
20. Mackay, *FEM*, I. 259.
21. *M*. II. 412 ff.

22. Thomson *SAGS* I. 209.
23. *Ibid.*, 216.
24. See my *AIR*, 114-129.
25. James, *PR*, 172.
26. Ellis, *ESP*, 41 f; *YSP*, 65; Johnston, *RC*, 405; Aston, *S*, 71, 88 ff.
27. Grimm, *TM*, 212, 1354.
28. Hartland, *PP*, I. 63.
29. Harrison, *PSGR*, 122.
30. Farnell, *CGS*, III. 99.
31. Augustine, *De Civ. dei*, VII. 24; Keifer, *SLR*, 114 ff.
32. Marshall, *MIC*, pls. XIII. 1, 7; XIV. 2.4; Vats, *EH*, 51 ff, 140.
33. Bhandarkar, *CW*, IV. 209.
34. IX. 37.
35. Bagchi, *PPI*, 10, 14.
36. II. 71.
37. Licht, *SLAG*, 110-11.
38. *AAO*, 34-35.
39. Herodotus I. 199; Strabo XVI. 1.10.
40. Justin, *HP*, XVIII. 5.
41. Farnell, *CGS*, II, 746; Jastrow, *RBA*, 475 ff.
42. Strabo, XI, 14.16.
43. Ramsey, *CBP*, I. 95.
44. Sandars, *EG*, 83 ff.
45. *DI*. I. 7.
46. James, *CMG*, 81-83.
47. *GB* (ab), 135-36.
48. *M*, III. 196 ff.
49. *FL*, XXV. 183.
50. Bhattacharyya, *AIR*, 114-129.
51. Butler, *TAPA*, 226.
52. Macmillan, in *CR*, CIII, 188.
53. Hodson, *NTM*, 168.
54. Dalton, *DEB*, 196.
55. Shortt, *HRSI*, II. 11 ff.
56. *Idem* in *TES* (NS), VII. 282.
57. *JAS* (S), XIX, 7.
58. I. 9.2.7; I. 9.2.11; VI. 3.1.28; VI. 4.3.7; VI. 6.1.11; etc. See *SBE*, XII, XLI.
59. II. 4.4.21; II. 5.1.11; V. 3.1.19; V. 2.5.8; VI. 3.1.30; VI. 3.3.38; VII. 5. 1.6. etc.
60. I. 7.2.14; I. 9.2.7; II. 3.1.32 f; V. 3.3.7 f; VI. 3.3.18; VII. 4.2.24; etc.
61. For details see my *AIR*, 1-21.
62. *VS*, XXIII. 22-31.
63. See my *AIR*, 48-69.
64. VI. 4.3.
65. VI. 4.6-7.
66. *Ch.U.*, V. 8.1.2; *Br.U.*, VI. 2.13.

67. II. 13.
68. Hume's tr.
69. Chattopadhyaya, *L*, 294 f.
70. *EI*, XXIX, 138-39.
71. XIII. 8.3.3.
72. LXX. 112.
73. Kosambi, *MR*, 73.
74. Evans, *PM*, I. 49, fig. 12.13.
75. Zamit in *JRAI*, LIV, 79 ff.; idem, *PM*, 13 ff.; Murray, *EM*, 11, 19.
76. Nilsson, *MMR*, 439; Harrison, *PSGR*, fig 86.
77. Harrison, *PSGR*, 469.
78. James, *PR*, 24-41.
79. Nilsson, *HGR*, 31.
80. Some beautiful specimens are preserved in Greek poems, cf. Theocritus XV, Bion I.
81. Cf. Catullus, LXIII; Ovid, *Fasti*, IV. 223 ff.
82. Breasted, *RTAE*, 8 ff.
83. Kramer, *SM*, 83 ff; Sayce, *RAB*, 221 ff; Jastrow *RBA*, 563 ff.
84. VII. 17.10; Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, V. 5; Lucian, *Dialogui Deorum*, 12.
85. *Antiquitates Romanae*, II. 19.
86. V. 77; cf. Plutarch, *IO*, 35.
87. *SPW*, 37 ff.
88. II. 59.
89. I. 14.
90. *De Civitate Dei*, VIII. 27.
91. *De Cult Feminarum*, 7.
92. Farnell, *CGS*, V. 124.
93. The transition from one stage of life to another is effected by the rites of initiation. The function of initiation—to admit the child to the status of adult—is expressed in primitive thought as a belief that the child dies and is born again (Cf. the Indian conception of *dvijatva*). In primitive thought, every serious event in physical life is equivalent to death followed by resurrection. The qualification for admission into the adult group is not birth, but rebirth, See my *IPR*, 5 ff; for the Greek rituals of initiation see Thomson, *AA*, 97 ff.
94. XCII. 43 f. (Pargiter's tr.).
95. Marshall, *MIC*, I. 52.
96. Jacobi in *ERE*, V. 217.
97. *Ibid.*, 63 ff; Mackay, *FEM*, I. 337-38.
98. XII. 1.
99. IV. 27.
100. *CGS*. III. 184.
101. III. 141.
102. VII. 110. 14-16.
103. Herodotus, II. 47.
104. Pausanias, VII. 17.10.

105. Strabo, XXII. 8.9.
106. II. 14.
107. Quoted in Mackenzie's *EML*.
108. *IC*, II. 131-33.
109. II. 1. 34; VII. 32. 52; 110. 14-16.
110. VII. 72. 42.
111. *RV*, IV. 57; *AV*, III. 17.4; *YV*, XII. 69-72; *Gobhila GS*, IV. 4. 27-30; *Pāraskara GS*, II. 17. 9-10; cf Hopkins in *JAOS*, XVIII, 85; Keith, *RPV*, 186, *VBYS*, 306; *SBE*, XXIX, 339, XXX, 113-14.
112. I. 24.
113. Viṣṇu, III. 14.
114. I. 66. 13-14; VII. 110. 14-16.
115. *ERE*, V. 828.
116. *CMG*, 228-29.
117. Thomson *AA*, 15-16.
118. Bernal, *SH*, 61.
119. Briffault, *M*, II. 251-52.
120. In fact, out of 10,462 verses of the *RV* only 25 refer to agriculture (I. 23.15; 117.21; II. 14.11; IV. 57.1-8; V. 53.13; VI. 6.4; VIII. 20.19; 22.6; 78.10; X. 34.13; 48.7; 83.37; 94.13; 101.3-4; 117.7; 146.6). In the older portions of the *RV*, we have only three words of agricultural significance—*urdara* (II. 14.11), *dhānya* (V. 53.13) and *vyapanti* (VI. 64)—while the entire IV. 57.1-8 is proved to be later interpolation. See Hopkins in *JAOS*, XVII. 85n. Side by side the importance attached to the possession of cattle is shown by numerous passages. The word *go* denoting the cow is used as one of the synonyms of *pṛthivī*, the earth. According to the *Nighaṇṭu* (II. 11), nine other terms were also used to denote the cow. Even in the *RV* the gods are invoked as offspring of the cows (VI. 50.11) and the poets did not hesitate to compare their songs with the lowing of cows (VII. 32.22; VII. 106.1; IX. 22.2; etc.) or to designate the starry heaven after the term *gāvaḥ* (I. 154.6; VII. 36.1). 'Again and again in the songs and invocations to the gods, the prayer for cattle and horses occurs. Also the strife amongst the hostile aboriginal inhabitants turn on the possession of cattle. Therefore, too, the old word for "war" or "battle" is originally desire for cattle (*gaviṣṭi*). In the most extravagant expressions, cows and bullocks are praised as the most precious possessions.' Winternitz, *HIL*, I. 64-65.
121. Briffault, *M*, III. 59.
122. X. 84.
123. V. 84; cf. *AV*, XII. 1.
124. Macdonell, *VM*, 124 ff.
125. Cf. Hopkins, *RI*, 541.
126. *ERE*, II. 15.
127. Frazer, *AAO*, 394-95.
128. Robertson Smith, *KMEA*, 306.
129. *AAO*, 398.

130. Pinches, *RBA*, 94.
131. *GB*. 96.
132. *IAR*, 148-49.
133. *MIC*, I. 57.
134. Hogarth in *ERE, I. 147*.
135. For the problems of mother-right in general and the myth and reality of its influence on Indian society, life and religion, see Appendix I.

The Mothers: Forms of the Cult

EARTH AND CORN MOTHERS

It appears from the foregoing account that the Earth Mothers came into being when people began to settle down in agricultural communities. In fact, in every place, the Mother Goddess is mainly concerned with vegetation and fertility. In the Germanic provinces of Europe, corn was very commonly personified under the name of the Corn Mother. She played an important part in the harvest festivals. The last sheaf of corn, variously called 'Corn Mother', 'Harvest Mother', 'Great Mother', 'Ground Mother', 'Old Woman', etc., was often shaped and dressed as a woman, and carried with dance and song to the farm house. The Peruvians believed all useful plants to be animated by a Divine Mother who causes their growth. The Corn Mother of Europe had her match in the Rice Mother of Indonesia. The Javanese think that rice is under the special guardianship of a female spirit called Saning Sari, who is conceived as being so closely knit with the plant that the rice often goes by her name, as with the Romans the corn was called Ceres. This so-called 'Mother of Rice' is the occasion of a number of ceremonies observed at the planting and harvesting of the rice as well as during its preservation in the barn. The ideas on which these customs rest are not confined to any particular race, but naturally suggests themselves to all backward peoples engaged in agriculture.[1]

It is probable therefore that Demeter and Persephone, those stately and beautiful figures in Greek mythology, grew out

of the same simple beliefs and practices which still prevail among our modern peasantry, and that they were represented by rude dolls made out of the yellow sheaves of many a harvest field long before their breathing images were wrought in bronze and marble by the master hands of Phidias and Praxiteles.[2]

Among the Teutonic deities, the goddess Nerthus represented Mother Earth. Tacitus could recognise this deity of his own land among the German tribes: '*Nerthum id est Terram Matrem.*'[3] The latter goddess, Terra Mater or Tellus or Ops Mater was the Earth Goddess of the Romans, and they carried her cult far and wide. The Teutonic Tamfana, Frija and Nehalennia were intimately associated with the earth, while the giantess Jordh, mother of Thor, was simply the Earth. Thor, in addition to his being the thunderer, was a god of fertility who sent the showers to fertilize the ground and produce the fruits of the earth, being the son of Jordh, the Earth Mother. It is interesting to note that the Sun was female in Norse mythology. In the prose *Edda* we also come across a group of goddesses known as *asynja*, who were probably earth spirits.[4] The Celts were originally matrilineal peoples and in their religion, goddesses predominated over the gods. The earliest Gaelic pantheon was known as Tuatha De Danann. They believed that all their deities sprang from a great Earth Mother called Danu. The British gods were also children of the great Earth Goddess Don, who was evidently a counterpart of Danu, the mother of the Tuatha De Danann.[5] In Estonian religion, Mother Earth was the presiding deity also of birth and death. In Finn mythology, Akka was the Earth Goddess who was popularly called great-grandmother.[6] The earlier inhabitants of Armenia worshipped a great Earth Goddess who had identical characteristics of the Babylonian Ishtar. This goddess was later known as Anahit whose Iranian counterpart was Anahita or Anaitis. The Iranian Spenta Armaiti became in Armenian Sandrament who was first changed into the goddess of the Earth and of Hades and became the wife of Armazd; and finally there was a total transformation when she became a male-god.[7]

Such titles as 'the mother', 'the good mother from whom

all things originiate' as well as a cult of Earth, were widespread among the American Indian tribes. In Mexico, Centeotle and in Peru, Mama Pacha were worshipped as the Earth Goddesses.[8] The goddess Centeotle absorbed many other goddesses, like the Babylonian Ishtar. She was the 'maize mother' which she protected and nourished. Her name also includes Tonacajohua, i.e., the goddess who sustains. As the Earth Goddess, she was also the Goddess of death who took the dead to her bosom. Another Earth Goddess of Mexico was Conatlicue who was also a goddess of death and war.[9] The Earth Goddess of the Aztecs was depicted as a many-breasted woman, like the Ephesian Artemis.[10] The Caribs, when there is an earthquake, say that it is their goddess dancing. The Comanches call the earth their Mother. The Algonquins sing medicine-songs to Mesukkumik Okwi, the Earth, the great-grandmother of all.[11] The cult of an Earth Mother is also in vogue among many African tribes. In different parts of Western Africa she is the object of an extensive cult.[12] In China, the cult of the Earth Goddess is associated with tree worship. The ancient Chinese believed that their source of life was a gigantic peach tree which was surrounded by a beautiful garden that was under the direct care of the goddess Si Wang Mu. She appears to have originally been an Earth Goddess whose Japanese counterpart was Seiobo. Sometimes she is depicted as a weird deity like the Phigalian Demeter.[13] The tree of immortality was closely associated with the Far Eastern Earth Mother, who might appear before favoured mortals either as a beautiful woman or as a woman riding on a dragon, or as half-woman and half-fish or half-woman and half-serpent.[14] Yin, the Female Principle of Taoism, is sometimes equated with the earth.

In every primitive agricultural community, the Earth is propitiated with sacrifices and magical rites. The cult of the Earth Mother is recalled in the present Indian marriage rituals and she is also worshipped as a household goddess. Bhūmi or the Earth has always a place in the village cults and to this divinity are offered cakes, sweetmeats and fruits.[15] The worship of Mother Earth assumes many varied forms. Throughout Northern India, the belief in the sanctity of the Earth is universal. The Earth is believed to possess mystic powers and is

regarded as a remedy for disease. There is a widespread belief that a man can derive strength from the touch of the Mother Earth.

But the Earth is worshipped mainly in connection with agricultural seasons. Sacrifices are offered and she is asked to be propitious.[16] The Oraon farmer, before transplanting his rice seedlings, makes a libation of wine on the ground to propitiate the earth.[17] They believe that the corn Mother watches over the threshing floor until the next harvest. The Oraon girls, during the time of sowing, pat the Earth to render her fertile. We may compare this action to a Greek vase painting interpreted by Jane Harrison, wherein a Satyr is represented as beating the ground to wake the Earth.[18] They also celebrate the ritual marriage of the head of their pantheon, Dharmi, the source of life and light, with the Earth Goddess at the Khaddi festival held annually in the spring when the *Sal* trees begin to blossom. In Hoshangabad the completion of the sowing is celebrated by the Macandri Pūjā, or worship of Mother Earth, a ceremony intented to evoke fertility.

Every cultivator does the work himself, with his family, servants, etc.; no Brāhmaṇa need join it. At the edge of one of his fields, intended for spring harvest, the cultivator puts up a little semi-circle or three-sided wall of mud about a foot-high, meant to represent a hut. This is covered over with green *khas* grass to represent thatch. At the two ends of the hut two parts of *Palāśa* wood are erected, with leaves round the head like those which are put up at marriage. They are tied to the thatch with red thread. In the centre of this little house, which is the temple of Macandri or Mother Earth, a little fire is made, and milk is placed on it to boil in a tiny earthen pot. It is allowed to boil over as a sign of abundance. While this is going on, the ploughmen, who are all collected in a field, drive their bullocks at trot, striking them wildly; it is the end of the year's labour for the cattle. The cultivator meanwhile offers a little rice, molasses and saffron to Macandri and then makes two tiny holes in the ground to represent granaries; he drops a few grains in and covers them over; this is a symbol of

prayer, that his granary may be filled from the produce of the land.[19]

In the Eastern Punjab, Mother Earth is called Shaod Mātā whom the farmers invoke to increase their agricultural production and to make their bankers and rulers contented.[20] Before the Kharwars of Mirzapur begin to sow they invoke Mother Earth.[21] In the month of August they do a special service in her honour, known as Hariārī Pūjā or 'worship of greenery' at the time of transplanting the rice. This goddess is also worshipped in the rainy season by the Bhuiyas, Kols and Binds of Uttar Pradesh who employ their Bagia priest to sacrifice chickens and to pour a libation of wine on the field after the harvest or before the sowing season.[22] The Kharwars sometimes call their goddess Devī Dāi or Nurse-goddess, and in times of trouble sprinkle rice and pulse in her name on the ground. The Korwas, Pataris, Majhwars and Ghasias call her Dharti Mātā (Dharitrī) which means 'supporter' or 'upholder'.[23] To propitiate Mother Earth, the Khonds offer sacrifice, animal as well as human.[24] The Garo priests, at sowing time, invoke Rohimi or Rokeme, the Earth and Corn Mother.[25]

The association of Mother Earth with woman is also found in rain magic. In many parts of India when there is drought, rain is invoked by a number of women who strip themselves naked.[26] Two of them are yoked to a plough while the third holds the handle and a pretence of ploughing is made.[27] During the Gorakhpur famine in 1873-78, there were many accounts of women stripping themselves naked at night and dragging the plough over the fields.[28] Of regular nudity rites in case of the failure of rain we have an instance from Chunar.

The rains of this year held off for a long time and last night (24th July 1892) the following ceremony was performed secretly. Between the hours 9 and 10 P.M. a barber's wife went from door to door and invited all the women to join in ploughing. They all collected in a field from which all males were excluded. Three women of a cultivator's family stripped off all their clothes; two were yoked to a plough like oxen, and the third held the handle. Then they began to imitate the operation of ploughing. The woman

who had the plough in her hand shouted, 'O Mother Earth, bring parched grain, water and chaff. Our bellies are bursting to pieces from hunger and thirst.' Then the landlord and village accountant approached them and laid down some grain, water and chaff in the field. The women then dressed and went home. By the grace of god the weather changed almost immediately, and we had a good shower.[29]

The same rite was performed in a village near Lucknow on 30 July 1963, and it was reported in the newspapers. This curious custom of rain-making has a series of remarkable parallels in Europe. Frazer remarks that:

> Such attempts are by no means confined, as the cultivated reader might imagine, to the naked inhabitants of those sultry lands like Central Australia and some parts of Eastern or Southern Africa where for months together the pitiless sun beats down out of a blue and cloudless sky on the parched and gapping earth. They are, or used to be, common enough among outwardly civilized folk in the moist climate of Europe.[30]

The motive behind this rite is that the earth requires vital fluid, symbolized by the rains, for the production of crops, just as a woman requires the same to produce a child. It is a simple case of imitative magic.

Everywhere in India the Devī or goddess is mainly concerned with vegetation and fertility. In Rajasthan, Gaurī is worshipped as the Earth Goddess concerned with vegetation and fertility. At Udaipur in Rajasthan a festival is held:

> in honour of Gaurī or Īśānī, the goddess of abundance, the Isis of Egypt, the Ceres of Greece. Like the Rajput Saturnalia, which it follows, it belongs to the vernal equinox, when nature in these regions proximate to the tropic is in full expanse of her charms, and the matronly Gaurī casts her golden mantle over her verdant Vāsantī, personification of spring. Then the fruits exhibit their promise to the eye; the *Kohil* fills the ear with melody; the air is impregnated

with aroma and the crimson poppy contrasts with the spikes of golden grain to form a wreath for the beneficent Gaurī. Gaurī is one of the names of Īśā or Pārvatī, wife of the greatest of the gods, Mahādeva or Īśvara, who is conjoined with her in these rites which almost exclusively appertain to women. The meaning of Gaurī is 'yellow', emblematic of the ripened harvest when the votaries of the goddess adore her effigies, which are those of a matron painted the colour of ripe corn.[31]

An image of the goddess and a smaller one of her husband are placed together. A small trench is next dug and barley is sown in it. The women dance round it, hand in hand, invoking the blessing of the goddess. The images of the goddess and her husband are decorated and borne to a lake. Here the women carry the image of Gaurī down a marble staircase to the water's edge and dance round it singing love songs.[32]

No men are allowed to take part in this ritual. The small trench in which barley is sown resembles what is called the 'Garden of Adonis', which is the custom of planting, in pots or a trench, corn, herbs and flowers as charms to promote the growth of vegetation. Numerous examples of such 'Gardens of Adonis' have been collected by Frazer. In various parts of Italy and all over Sicily it is still customary to put plants in water or in earth on the Eve of St. John, and from the manner in which they are found to be blooming or fading on St. John's day, omens are drawn, especially concerning the fortunes of love. In Prussia, two hundred years ago, the farmers used to send their servants, especially their maids, to gather St. John's wort, on Midsummer Eve or Midsummer Day. When they had fetched it, the farmer took as many plants as there were persons and stuck them on the wall or between the beams; and it was thought that the person whose plants did not bloom would soon fall sick or die. The rest of the plants were tied in a bundle, fastened to the end of a pole set up at the gate or wherever the corn would be brought in at the next harvest. The bundle was called Kupola, and the ceremony was known as Kupola's festival in which the farmer prayed for a good harvest. But the 'Gardens of Adonis' as the name implies, were mostly used in

connection with the festivals of the Mother Goddess and her consort.[33]

Among the Oraons and Mundas, 'Gardens of Adonis' are specially cultivated by women in the sowing season.[31] In Rajasthan, the young corn is taken up from the 'Garden of Adonis' and distributed by the women to the men, who wear it in their turbans. In these rites, the distribution of the barley shoots to the men points clearly to the desire for offspring along with the rapid growth of vegetation. The same motive probably explains the use of the 'Gardens of Adonis' at the marriage festivals. In Madras, seeds of five or nine sorts are mixed and sown in earthen pots; the bride and bridegroom water the seeds for four days and on the fifth day the seedlings are thrown into a tank or river.[35] In the Himalayan districts of North-Western India the cultivators sow barley, maize, pulse or mustard in a basket of earth on the twenty-fourth day of the fourth month of the Hindu calendar and on the last day of the month they place the new sprouts among small clay images of Śiva or Pārvatī and worship them. Next day they cut down the green stalks and wear them in their head-dress.[36] At the temple of Padmāvatī, near Pandharpur in Bombay, during the Navarātra, a 'Garden of Adonis' is cultivated in front of the pedestal of the goddess.[37] A similar rite is observed before the images of two other goddesses, Ambabāi and Lakhubāi, who also have temples in the same region.[38] In many parts of Northern India there is a festival, the *Jayi* or *Jawara* of upper India, and the *Bhujaria* or Madhya Pradesh, in which, in the seventh day of the bright half of the month of *Śrāvaṇa*, grains of barley are sown in a pot of manure and on the first day of the next month, the women and girls take the yellowish green stalks out and distribute the plants to their male friends who bind them in their turbans.[39] At Sargal this ceremony is observed about the middle of September. On the last day of the function, the women of every family bring their own pots and having laid them on the ground they dance round them. Then taking the pots of sprouting corn they descend to the edge of the water, wash the soil away from the pots, and distribute the young plants among their friends.[40]

Reference should be made in this connection to the ritual of the vegetation deity Itu who is worshipped exclusively by the

Bengali women on the Sundays of the month of Agrahāyana. She seems to be a goddess since the epithets, *lakṣmī*, *ṭhākurāṇī*, etc., are attributed to her. The most striking feature of her ritual is the 'Garden of Adonis'. In an earthen pot, rice, pulses and barley are sown and tended for a month; several other plants are also allowed to sprout in the pot. Four small vessels (*ghaṭas*) filled with water which represent the female womb are placed on the pot. On the last Sunday of the month these 'Gardens' are carried to a river or tank by the women and thrown into the water.

In Western India, various kinds of grain are worshipped in honour of the Mother Goddess, and the mother is invoked to enter the seedlings which are worshipped and finally thrown into the river.[41] In Uttar Pradesh, on one of the Navarātra days, sacred to Devī Durgā, special agricultural rites are performed.[42] In Kashmir and Punjab, during the Navarātra, plants of barley and wheat are placed in an earthen pot and offered to the Mother Goddess. Throughout South India, the vegetation goddess is worshipped as *amma* or mother. In Bengal, the goddess Śrī (Ceres) or Lakṣmī is symbolized by a quantity of rice kept in a basket, and on the basket, over the heap of rice, a wooden pot popularly called *gāchkauṭā* or tree-case, is placed. It is shaped like a womb and smeared with vermilion. The basket itself is decorated by cowrie-shells which symbolize female organs. On the appointed days, the pot is installed on a wooden throne or platform by the oldest lady of the house. The said ritual is performed four times in a year. In the month of Bhādra (August-September) on the eve of the reaping of the *āśu* crop of rice, the ritual of Bhādralakṣmī is performed. The ritual is again performed in the evening of the annual festival of the goddess Kālī held on the next new-moon day of the Durgā worship (October-November). Again in the month of Pauṣa (December-January) with the reaping of the *āmana* crop of rice, the ritual of Pauṣa-lakṣmī is observed, while in the month of Caitra (March-April) when the crops sown in winter ripen, the ritual of Caitralakṣmī takes place.

Of the other varieties of the Lakṣmī rituals, the following may be noted. On the full moon day, immediately after the worship of the goddess Durgā, the ritual of Kojāgarī-Lakṣmī takes place. Her image is installed and worshipped. According to the

popular belief, the goddess comes at night and knocks at the door of every house. Her worshippers keep the lamps burning and wait for her arrival throughout the night. This Lakṣmī is probably an offshoot of the goddess Durgā, and in the capacity of Corn Mother her relationship with the latter resembles that of Persephone with Demeter. On the last day of the month of Kārtika (middle of October) we have the ritual of Muṭh-lakṣmī in which a few stalks of rice are carried from field to the house. In the next month these stalks are worshipped in connection with Navānna-lakṣmī or the 'Lakṣmī of the New Rice'. Besides these Lakṣmī rituals, those of the *Navapatrikā*, an important aspect of the Durgā worship, clearly shows that the goddess is concerned with vegetation. The *Navapatrikā* consists of nine leaves or plants: *rambhā*, *kaccvī*, *haridrā*, *jayantī*, *bilva*, *dāḍima*, *aśoka*, *mānaka* and *dhānya*. Each of these plants is associated with a goddess: *rambhā* with Brahmāṇī, *kaccvī* with Kālikā, *haridrā* with Durgā, *jayantī* with Kārttikī, *bilva* with Śivā, *dāḍima* with Raktadantikā, *aśoka* with Śokarahitā, *mānaka* with Camunḍā and *dhānya* with Lakṣmī. The nine goddesses presiding over these nine plants are collectively called Navadurgā. These plants are tied up with an *aparajitā* creeper, bathed in a tank or river, and then worshipped individually. Thus in the Durgā worship, which is the most popular expression of the mother-cult of our times, a very close relation between the Mother Goddess and the vegetative forces of nature may clearly be observed.

THE PROTECTRESS OF CHILDREN

The idea that the goddess of fertility must herself be fertile obviously led to the conception of the Mother Goddess as the protectress of children. As the source of human fecundity, she causes the conception of children in women, delivers them out of their mother's womb safely and protects them from all dangers and evils. The old Cretan Mother Goddess whose different characteristics were absorved by her Hellenic offshoots was associated with fertility and childbirth.[43] In Crete and Lakonis, Eileithyia was worshipped as an independent goddess of childbirth whose cult became widespread in Greece and the

neighbouring islands.[44] Her association with Artemis, who was even called sometimes Eileithyia, and Kourotrophos, was the result of their common functions in connection with midwifery. The Greek Artemis was the protectress of children. In many places, maidens on their marriage used to dedicate to her the maiden chiton or girdle, and so she was called 'girdle-looser'. Sometimes, after confinement married women dedicated their girdle and garment to her.[45] The famous Artemis of Ephisus was thought of as a nurse and all-nourishing mother, as is indicated by the numerous breasts of her cult image. The Roman form of this goddess was Diana who, like her Greek sister, absorbed the characteristics of two goddesses—Lady of the Wild creatures and Protectress of Children. At her sanctuaries, pregnant women used to offer candles and other articles to ensure easy delivery.[46] Juno, the Roman counterpart of the Greek Hera, was also originally a special goddess of childbirth.[47] She was mainly concerned with birth, marriage and maternity and was essentially the goddess of women and of fecundity, particularly of childbirth.[48] The great goddess Ishtar, who was worshipped under many names, was a protectress of children.[49]

Sometimes the protectresses of children were regarded as malevolent spirits, especially where the rate of infant mortality was high. They had to be appeased so that they might not cause any harm to the children. In the *Mahābhārata*[50] we come across Rākṣasī Jarā who was the protectress of children. She was worshipped in two ways--by painting or carving her figure along with those of her children on house walls, and by offering her flowers, incense and various kinds of food. She was also the city goddess of Magadha and her legend centred round the birth of Jarāsandha. King Bṛhadratha of Magadha had two wives, but he failed to obtain a son, even by means of auspicious rites and sacrifices. At last a great sage called Caṇḍakauśika gave him a fruit. His queens, dividing that single fruit into two parts, ate it up, and sometimes after, when the season came, each of the queen brought forth a fragmentary body, each having one eye, one leg, one arm, half a stomach and half face. Both the halves were thrown away on the road and were accidentally seen by Rākṣasī Jarā who took the halves and united them. As soon as it was done, the baby became alive. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Egyptian sisters Isis and Nepthys were

both mothers of Osiris—'the progeny of the two cows'. Two goddesses were also associated with the birth of the Sumerian god Tammuz. They were Ishtar and Belitsheri.[51] These legends may have some bearing on the idea of 'group motherhood', as we shall see later. Seven mothers were also associated with the birth of Skanda-Viśākha-Kārttikeya.[52]

The Buddhist conception of Hārītī is also that of the protectress mother. According to the popular Buddhist legend, Hārītī, who was a Yakṣī, used to devour the babies of Rājagṛha. But this ogress was converted when she came in touch of the Buddha. Thereupon she began to be conceived as the protectress of children. Sculptures representing the goddess and her consort are preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.[53] This very goddess, who is represented in the Gandhāra sculpture, either as standing or seated, can be readily recognised from the children hanging around her.[54] A figure of this goddess about four feet high is found at Sahri-bahlol. Its right and left upper arms carry a bell and a trident respectively, while in the lower pair are held the figure of a small child and a *loṭā*-shaped bowl.[55] From Tayapur near Mathura comes a sculpture of Hārītī which represents her with an infant on her lap and four children between the feet. On the pedestal is carved a group of children at play. The villagers used to worship this image as Gāndhārī, the mother of the Kauravas. The wide distribution of this type of figurine is suggestive of the wide range of popularity of the protectress deities.

South Indian village Mothers are in many cases the protectresses of children. They are, as we shall see later, essentially local in character, and have also other functions to perform. The goddess Dhelai-caṇḍī is worshipped in different parts of Bengal as the protectress of children. She lives in a sacred grove and rags are tied to the branches of its trees to secure the birth of children. The goddess Vanadurgā is worshipped for the welfare of children in many villages of the Mymensingh district, now in Bangladesh. The goddess Chaṭhī or Ṣaṣṭhī is worshipped by the Chamar caste scattered over the regions to the north of the Vindhyas as protectress of children.[57] This goddess later rose into prominence and was able to secure a place in the Purāṇas and to receive an all-India character. In Bengal,

the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī protects the infants and is worshipped on the sixth day after their birth.[58] The village folk set the goddess under a tree—in most cases, the jack-tree (a symbol of abundance because of its capacity to produce plenty of jack-fruits). The goddess, generally represented by a stone, is invoked for safeguarding the mother and the child against the influence of malevolent spirits. The cowrie shell, regarded as a symbol of the Mother Goddess, on account of its apparent similarity with the female generative organ, is used as an amulet which children carry in order to protect themselves against evil spirits. In the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*,[59] we find a legend centring round this goddess. There was a very pious king named Priyavrata, in the times of Svāyambhūva Manu, who remained childless for a long time. So he had the *Putreṣṭiyajña* (sacrifice for obtaining a child) performed by Kaśyapa, in consequence of which his wife, after twelve years of conception, gave birth to a dead child. The king, naturally shocked, carried the child to the cremation ground. Suddenly a goddess appeared before him and, saying that she was the daughter of Brahmā and the wife of Kārttikeya, revived the child. The king was so pleased that he took the mission of popularizing the cult of Ṣaṣṭhī.

In the Purāṇas, Ṣaṣṭhī was able to obtain a higher rank. She was conceived as the sixth part of Prakṛti and the wife of Skanda-Kārttikeya. When Skanda was born, various kinds of terrifying phenomena occurred. The gods, having heard of the power of Skanda, advised Indra to kill him without delay. Indra sent the Divine Mothers to kill the child. But when they met Skanda, they were full of affection for him and became his protectresses. When Indra saw that his plan had failed, he led a huge celestial army against Skanda. The gods were defeated and surrendered to him. Indra then hurled his thunderbolt at Skanda which pierced his right side and from this part of his body emerged Viśākha who began to create havoc among the gods. Seeing him, Indra was frightened and sought his protection. A number of female spirits came into being, when Skanda was struck with the thunderbolt. By Skanda's blessing they became the protectresses of children. They were known as Kākī, Hālimā, Mālinī, Vṛnhilā, Āryā, Palālā and Vaimitrā. Skanda was married to Devasenā who

was also known by such names as Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinivālī, Kuhū, Sadvṛtti and Aparajitā.[60]

THE CITY GODDESSES

Since procreation and cultivation were closely linked in primitive thought, a goddess of fertility and childbirth might also be the protectress deity of a primitive city which could not flourish without an extensive agricultural background. The protectresses of children of the Semitic world were also the protectresses of cities.

> There were at least one goddess as patrons of each of the cities sharing with her lord the devotion of its worshippers. Instances are Nana, patroness of Urk; 'Good lady' Bau, Mother of Lagash, Ninlil of Nippur, 'mistress of the lower world' and others.[61]

The goddess Ishtar, who was the protectress of children, was also the presiding deity of the ancient Semitic cities. She was worshipped as Inanna in Erech, Nina in Ninevh, Annuit in Akkad and Zarpaint in Babylon. The goddess Athena was originally a tutelary goddess of the Cretan and Mycenaean princes, and subsequently she was raised to the dignity of the goddess of a republican Hellenic state, the important Attic city being named after her.[62] The Egyptian Isis likewise was also the protectress of cities. Even the Christian Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*, i.e., Mother of God, was looked upon as the protectress of particular cities, towns, sanctuaries and localities with titles such as Our Lady of Zaragoza, of Mount Carmel, of Glastonbury, of Walsigham, etc.[63]

References to the city-goddesses of India (*nagara devatā*) are found in many sources. They were not only protective deities but also maintainers of luck and prosperity (*naraga-lakṣmī*), and popular stories about their departure from a city were meant to convey the idea of imminent danger or reversal of fortune. These goddesses are mentioned in literature and depicted on coins. 'City goddess and Indian bull' is the most common type of Puṣkalāvatī coins. The goddess Jarā who is

mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as the protectress of children was also the protectress deity of Magadha. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we come across the goddess Laṅkā who was the protectress of the city of the same name.[64]

In India, numerous cities and towns, and even villages, mountains, rivers and forests, are named after the Mother Goddess. Even a casual glance over the railway time tables or postal directories is sufficient to have an understanding of this. The southern-most point of India, Cape Comorin, is named after the goddess Kumarī who is mentioned even in the foreign records like the *Periplus*. The famous northern cities like Kalka, Chandigarh, Simla, Nainital, etc., were named after their presiding goddesses. In Bengal, the goddess Kālī is generally worshipped as the protectress of a particular city or locality (Cf. Kapileśvarī of Kapilmuni on the Kapotākṣa, Ḍhākeśvarī and Ramna-kālī of Dacca, Caṭṭaleśvarī of Chittagong, Yaśoresvarī of Iswaripur, ancient Yaśohara, etc. After the partition of Bengal in 1947, such goddesses as Ḍhākeśvarī or Yaśoreśvarī have also become refugees, and now we have their temples in different parts of West Bengal).

Cunningham refers to Tewar or Tripura, the capital of the Kalacuri kings of Cedi, the guardian deity of which was Tripurādevī.[65] The goddess Tripuramālinī or Tripuranāśinī, mentioned in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*[66] is associated with the *pīṭha* (holy resort of the Mother Goddess) of Jālandhara. A goddess of the same name, Tripurasundarī is the protectress deity of the Tripurā state (Hill Tipperah), whose *pīṭha* has been located at Radhakishorepur (old Rangamati or Udaypur). The temple of this goddess was built by king Dharmamāṇikya. Of the famous city goddesses of Bihar, mention may be made of Gayeśvari Devī of Gaya and Pāṭnādevī or Pāṭanīśvarī of Patna. In Orissa, we have Kicakeśvarī of Khiching, Samaleśvarī of Sambalpur, etc. Of the city goddesses of Rajasthan reference may be made to Ambā worshipped at Amber, Karṇimātā worshipped at Bikaner, Khimalmātā worshipped at Vasantgarh and so on. In Mount Abu, Adhara Devī and Arbuda Mātā are worshipped as presiding goddesses.[67] Cunningham refers to Jālpa Devī as the guardian deity of Jvālāmukhī in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.[68] According to *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, the goddess is worshipped at Jvālāmukhī as Ambikā. In the

third quarter of the fourteenth century, Shams-i-Shiraj 'Afif mentions the goddess Jvālāmukhī whose temple was situated on the road to Nagarkot.[69] Abul Fazl also refers to this goddess.[70] According to *Devīpurāṇa*,[71] the presiding goddess of Ujjayīnī is Ujjayinī Devī. Cunningham also refers to Ujjayīnī Devī or Jvālā Devī as the guardian deity of the place.[72] The presiding deities of the *pīṭhas* were originally local goddesses, the protectresses of cities or localities, and the story of Satī's death, the falling of her limbs in different *pīṭhas*, etc., were obviously invented to bring all these goddesses in relation to the growing concept of an all pervading Female Principle.

THE GODDESS AND THE ANIMAL WORLD

'She continually appears to be an escort of the beasts for she is the mistress of the wild animals, snakes, birds and fishes', writes Glotz while describing the attributes of the Aegean Mother Goddess.[73] The Greek Artemis was the 'mistress of the beasts', 'lady of wild animals' and 'protectress of the young of all creatures'.[74] Her Roman sister Diana was also closely associated with animals in various capacities.[75] The Greek Artemis had some conceptual bearing on the lion-guarded goddess who was represented in her various forms, aspects and attributes on the sanctuary seals everywhere in Crete as well as on the Cypro-Mycenaean cylinders. Mā, the great goddess of Cappadocia, who is the consort of Teshub, stands on a lion or a panther like the Cretan Rhea or the Phrygian Cybele.[76] Atargatis, the great Syrian goddess of Hierapolis-Bambyce is portrayed sitting on the lion. The goddess Rhea is frequently represented with two lions standing on her knees.[77] Like Śiva, the consort of the Cappadocian Mother Goddess had for his vehicle a bull.

> The Father God at Boghaz-Keüi, meeting the Mother Goddess on her lioness, is attended by an animal which according to the usual interpretation is a bull; and that bull was itself worshipped apparently as an emblem of fertility at Euyuk near Boghaz-keüi.[78]

At Tarsus, as at Hierapolis-Bambyce, the Father God and the Mother Goddess would seem to have had as their sacred animals or emblems the bull and the lion respectively.

All these cults and concepts must have some bearing on those of the Indian Mother Goddess who is also the mistress and protectress of animals and has lion as her vehicle (*Siṃhavāhinī*). In the *Harivaṃśa*[79] it is said that the Mother Goddess living in the Vindhyas has the following of lions, tigers, rams, goats and fowls. In the *Śivapurāṇa*,[80] the Mother Goddess is described as the protectress of the tigers. In the *Devimāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, as well as in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa we come across the goddess Bhrāmarī, the mistress of the bees and the wasps. The bee was the symbol of Inanna or Nanaia, the great goddess of Western Asia who was conceived as the mother of Attis[81] and identified with Ishtar, Astarte, Artemis, Anaitis and Aphrodite.[82] In the *Devī-bhāgavata*[83] we come across details about the snake-mother Manasā. In the *Caṇḍimaṅgala*, a Bengali poetical work of the late-medieval period, the Mother Goddess is conceived as the protectress of all wild animals. The hero of the story, Kālaketu, was oppressing the animals who complained to the goddess, saying that they were helpless before Kālaketu and requested her to save them. The goddess thereupon took the form of an iguana (*godhā*) and stood on the way through which Kālaketu had to pass. Having seen it on the way Kālaketu brought it to his own hut where, in his absence, the goddess left her iguana form and assumed the shape of a beautiful damsel. The Devī's association with iguana is significant. In the *Kālikapurāṇa* as well as in the *Viśvasāra-tantra* the sacrifice of an iguana is brought in connection with the cult of the Mother Goddess. In Jain iconography, we have references to an iguana as the symbol of Gaurī.[83] In the *pratimālakṣana* quoted in Gopinath Rao's *Hindu Iconography* we come across such passages as *godhāsanā bhaved gaurī līlayā haṃsavāhanā*, etc. It is also to be noted that some primitive tribes of Madhya Pradesh worship the iguana as their totemic symbol.[84]

The Mother Goddess is worshipped in many places and among various tribes as the protectress of animals. In Madhya Pradesh, the Garia shepherds worship Disāi Devī as the protectress of the sheep-pen.[85] Bharcaṇḍī is worshipped by the

Tharus of Tarai as the cattle-protectress.[86] Among the Parayans, Bhagavatī is the goddess whose benevolence is responsible for the preservation of the vigour and health of the bulls.[87] All over India and especially in Bengal, Manasā is worshipped as the goddess presiding over the snakes. She is sometimes described as Jagad-gaurī as well as Padmāvatī. Her other names are Viṣahari and Bhujaṅgajananī Kamalā. Her plant *Euphorbia Neriifolia* is planted in the courtyard during the Daśahārā festival and worshipped on the occasion of the *Nāga Pañcamī*.[88] The cult of the snakes are also very popular in the lower Himalayas and is found there in the significant company of Nainā Devī.[89] It was practised all over the ancient world in association with the cult of the Mother Goddess. Goddesses like Artemis, Astarte, Isis, Gaea, Demeter and others had snakes also as their symbols.[90] In Bundelkhand, certain snakes, known as Bhirani, said to mean 'earth-dwellers', are recognised as a form of the Mother Goddess.[91]

The Rajputs consider the wild pig as representing the goddess Gaurī.[92] Bhainsāsurī, the deified buffalo, has become a form of the goddess Kālī in popular belief.[93] Among other animal forms of the Mother Goddess, we find that she is worshipped in the form of an elephant by the Khonds.[94] In a village called Padaraona, twelve miles to the West of the river Gandak, is a roofless temple dedicated to Hāthi Bhawāṇi, the elephant goddess. She is propitiated by crude votive figures of elephants in baked clay. But the figure inside the temple is male.[95] The people of Berar worship the Mother Goddess in the form of Bāghāi Devī, the tiger goddess.[96] At the north-east corner of the village Kurkihar near Gaya, there is a temple dedicated to Bāgheśvarī Devī. But the image inside is that of the eight-armed Durgā. The statue pointed out to Cunningham as that of Bāgheśvarī was a four-armed female seated on a lion with a child on her lap.[97] In Mysore villages, the goddess Huliamma is worshipped in a form of a tigress.[98]

All over India, the cow is regarded as a form of the Mother Goddess. This identification is not confined to India alone. In the late Pre-dynastic Egypt, her Ḥathor or cow-form was worshipped.[99] The goddess Neith was also conceived as a cow[100] while Isis was simply a cow-goddess. At Al'Ubaid on the Euphrates, the cow-goddess, later known as Nin-khursag,

was the mother of all beings.[102] Beef-eating is taboo to all Hindus. In pastoral societies, cattle are generally valued for milk and wealth, not for meat, and therefore the flesh of the domestic animals, especially of the cow, is commonly tabooed.[103] The taboo on food has thus an economic significance.[104] The Vedic tribes were Higher Pastorals and cattle were their chief source of wealth. This alone explains the taboo of beef-eating. But it remains to be seen how the Mother Goddess, who has a pre-Vedic agricultural foundation, has become identified with the cow. Did the Vedic tribes impose the taboo of beef-eating upon the native inhabitants for their economic conquest over the latter? Did they exploit the pre-Vedic Mother Goddess for the purpose and was it the reason for her identification with their chief source of wealth?

THE GODDESSES OF DISEASE

All over the world, the Mother Goddesses have often been conspicuously associated with diseases. The smallpox goddess is a form of Divine Mother universally adored under different names throughout India. From the most backward tribes and castes to the educated classes, the smallpox goddess is much dreaded. This goddess may either avert smallpox or cause it. In Northern India, she is called Śītalā Devī, one of the seven sisters who control pustular diseases.[105] The name of this goddess indicates the function of cooling. In the later medical treatises her iconographical features are described on the basis of what is given in the Kāśikhaṇḍa of the *Skandapurāṇa* in which the goddess is described as being of white body, seated on an ass with broomstick in one hand and a vessel full of water in the other. She is nude, three-eyed and decked with golden ornaments and pearls. In a relief carved on the northern wall of the Saciyā Mātā temple of Marwar we have an image which tally with the above description.[106] Śītalā was originally a popular deity who was able to find a place in the Purāṇas, like Manasā and thus to have a recognition in official Hinduism. M.M.H.P. Sastri wanted to connect Śītalā with the Buddhist Goddess Hārītī[107] on flimsy grounds. Her similarity is, however, more with Parṇaśabarī, another Buddhist goddess

of disease.[108] In a piece of sculpture found at the village of Vajrayogini in Dacca the goddess Parṇaśabarī is shown as trampling a few pox-marked figures and driving away the spirits of disease.[109] According to J.N. Banerjea,[110] Śītalā might have been a development of the goddess Jyesthā who is mentioned in the *Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra.*

As a smallpox goddess Śītalā is worshipped everywhere in Bengal. She is also known as Vasantabuḍi or Vāsantī Caṇḍi.[111] In the Jessore and Noakhali districts of Bengal her image is of a white-complexioned nude woman.[112] Among the Pods of Khulna she is not only the smallpox goddess, but the chief goddess as well.[113] Originally there was no image of this goddess. A crude stone with pox marks made by nails was her symbol. With the increase of her popularity not only were her iconographical features specialized, texts dealing with her legends, like the Bengali *Śītalāmaṅgala*, came into existence. In Benaras, there is an old temple of this goddess, and also one in Sasaram.[114] In Kangra there is a famous shrine of this goddess.[115] In Bihar she is worshipped under different names. Of these, Kankar Mātā is most dreaded, but happily her attacks are rare. Phulmātā and Pansahimātā attack children at the age of seven, Baḍimātā those between seven and fifteen, Gulsaila-mātā those of any age. This goddess is not only dreaded by the Hindus, but by the Muslims as well. The Muslim Atari tribes of Madhya Pradesh worship her as Mātā.[116] She is also known by Mātā Masānī and other names. In Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh she is worshipped under the name Śītalā-Bhavāni.[117] She is represented by a rude piece of stone placed on a platform under a *baroda* tree in Patiala and other parts of the Punjab.[118] In the South-East Punjab, Sītalā is attended by Sedhulāl, her servant, who is worshipped before her as an intercessor.[119] In Maharashtra, the image of this goddess is bathed in water with *nim* leaves which is sprinkled on the body of the patient. There the goddess is also invoked in connection of marriage. In Assam she is known as Āi and is conceived as one of the seven sisters who cause diseases.[120] In Orissa she is known as Ṭhākurāṇī. A few of her images have been found from the Maurbhanj district.[121] Ehrenfels refers to a number of matrilineal tribes among whom the pox-goddess

is a very important deity.[122] Sometimes she is worshipped by women alone.[123]

One of the South Indian village goddesses is Sitalamma who is connected with water.[124] It is tempting to connect her with Śītalā, but there is no reason to believe that both are same. One thing which should, however, be noted in this connection is that in some hymns dedicated to Śītalā, we come across the custom of worshipping her by installing her image or symbol into water, the cooling agent after which the goddess is designated. A goddess of the type of Sitalamma is Gangamma who is worshipped in the Masulipatam district.[125] In Mysore, Sukhajamma is the goddess of measles and pox.[126] In Bellary town, the pox goddess is Sunkalamma.[127]

But the goddess who is worshipped in almost every village of the Tamil country exclusively as the goddess of smallpox is Mariamma or Mari.[128] Various legends centre round the origin of this goddess. One of the many stories current about her is that she was the wife of a sage called Piruhu. One day, during the absence of the sage, three gods visited her to see whether she was as beautiful and virtuous as reported. Having understood their bad intention, the sage's wife, whose name was Nāgavali, transformed them into little children. The gods took offence and cursed her, so that her beauty faded away, and her face became dotted with marks like those of smallpox. According to a second story, Mariamma was the wife of the Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar and she cured her own smallpox by fanning herself with Margosa leaves. When she recovered, the people worshipped her as the goddess of smallpox and hung Margosa leaves over their doors to keep the smallpox away. In the third story Mariamma is identified with Reṇukā, the mother of Paraśurāma. Paraśurāma's father, who was suspicious of the chastity of his wife, ordered him to cut off the head of his mother. While doing so he also cut off the head of a Pariah woman who, out of sympathy, had taken the dead woman in her arms. Paraśurāma's father promised him a reward in return for his obedience: so Paraśurāma wanted his mother to be restored to life. The father approved of this and gave him some water in a vessel and a cane and asked him to put his mother's head on her body, to tap the body with the cane and to sprinkle water on it. In his eagerness Paraśurāma

put his mother's head on the body of the Pariah woman and vice-versa, and restored them both to life. The woman with the Brāhmaṇa head and Pariah body was afterwards worshipped as Mariamma, and the woman with the Pariah head as the goddess Yellamma. Referring to this story, Whitehead observes:

> The story . . . probably describes the fusion of the Aryan and Dravidian cults in the days when the Aryans first found their way into South India. A Pariah body with a Brāhmaṇa head is an apt description of the cult of Śiva; while a Pariah head with a Brāhmaṇa body might well describe some of the cults of the ancient Dravidian deities, modified by Brāhmaṇa ideas and influences.[129]

Various Caṇḍīs are worshipped in Bengal, such a Olāi, Dhelāi, Kalāi, Mehāi, Kulāi, Khaḍa, Vasana, Ghoḍā, Dharā, Abāka, Kakāi, etc.[130] Before their identification with the Great Caṇḍī of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, they were simple local goddesses worshipped in connection with disease and other troubles, and even after their identification they did not cease to continue their function. The Plague Mother is worshipped at Gaya as Bombāi Mai.[131] In South India she is worshipped as Plague-amma and sometimes in the Kannada districts as Uramma.[132] In many of the Telugu villages, the goddess Peddamma is worshipped in connection with epidemics. The goddess Pallalamma of Gudivada near Masulipatam also serves the same purpose. At Cocanada the goddess Nukalamma is usually worshipped, but when an epidemic of cholera breaks out, another goddess, called Maridiamma, is installed in her place. In the Canarese area two groups, each consisting of seven divinities, are worshipped in connection with various diseases. The first group consists of Annamma, Caṇḍīśvaramma, Mayeśvaramma, Maramma, Kokkalamma, Udalamma and Sukhajamma, while the second of Bisal Mari, Goonal-mari, Kel-mari, Yeerangere-mari, Hiride-vathi Cammandamma and Uttanahaliamma. In the Tanjore district, Mariamman, Angalamman and Kaliamman are all worshipped with typical rites. In the district of Trichinopoly, Kalumaiamman is the Cholera-Mother to whom animal sacrifices are offered.[133]

Usually, the Cholera-Mother is worshipped in her jar-symbolism under a big tree.[134] Her priests belong to the lower strata of society. In Uttar Pradesh, the Cholera-Mother is sometimes known as Kālī. She is also worshipped under the titles Hulkā Devī and Māri Māi.[135] In Bengal, she is also Kālī, worshipped during the epidemic on the cross road as Rakṣākālī or the protectress Kālī. But the typical Cholera-Mother of Bengal is Olāi-caṇḍi or Olā-bibi (for the Muslim worshippers). She is sometimes represented as wearing a gown and mounted on a horse, but usually her emblem is an earthen pot placed under a nim tree. She is also venerated as Didi Ṭhākrun, both by Hindus and Muslims, in the Burdwan district. Māri or Māri Bhawani is also worshipped as Cholera Mother in U.P. and the Punjab.[136] Throughout Central India, the Cholera-Mother is worshipped as Moti Mātā in the form of a stone before which goats are sacrificed and copper coins and flowers are offered.[137] In the time of cholera, the Bagia priests propitiate the village Mother Khermātā.[138] Among the Paltia Bhils of Central India, when cholera becomes an epidemic, the Badwa exorcists become possessed by the Village Mother. A jar filled with wine is put on a small wooden toy cart and dragged to the border of the village, the Badwas dancing under the inspiration of the goddess. At the border the cart is taken over by men from the next village and so it passes on.[139] When cholera breaks out, the Dhodias of Bombay carry an image of their goddess in a small cart and, having worshipped the image, they send it to the next village.[140] When cholera appears in the region of Bundi, the goddess Māri, decorated in funeral emblems, painted black and drawn by black oxen, is transported across the Chambal, with the commands of the priest that she should never again set foot in the village.[141] In the chapter on tribal divinities, we shall have the occasion to deal with many other such goddesses.

THE WAR GODDESSES

The Greek Athena was a goddess of war. Her association with craftsmanship was derived from her domestic Minoan prototype as the goddess of the household[142] and:

> It was not until she was brought into the service of the

> Mycenaean princes on the mainland that her more warlike characteristics became dominant. . . . In any case she was tutelary goddess of the Cretan and Mycenaean princes, subsequently raised to the dignity of the goddess of the republican state, the important Attic city being named after her. As its patroness, taking the place of the king, she became involved in its wars and acquired a military character, until eventually she was a mighty and furious war-goddess fighting all and sundry.[143]

The Phrygian Magna Mater Cybele, who was originally the goddess of vegetation and fertility, was also a goddess of war. She was brought to Rome in 204 B.C. to protect the country from the Hannibalic invasions, and as soon as she was installed in her temporary sanctuary her influence was felt, for that summer produced a bumper harvest and the following year Hannibal left Italy.[144] The Cappadocian Ma was also a war goddess for which she was easily identified with the Roman war goddess Bellona.

The Indian war goddesses are represented by Caṇḍikā, Kālī, Durgā and others. In the history of religion it is generally found that there is a constant 'struggle for existence' even among the divinities, and the 'fittest' of them can survive only by absorbing the qualities of others. Every important god or goddess must therefore be a composite character. Many of the Earth and Corn Mothers, under different historical conditions, merged their independent entities into some greater divinities. Thus the narrator of the Purāṇas knows the Corn Mother Śākambharī only as a form of the great goddess Durgā into whom she was absorbed. The rituals of Durgā clearly show that she was primarily a goddess of vegetation and fertility, like the Phrygian Cybele, but her name suggests her association with inaccessible mountain regions and her legends and iconographical features point to her warlike characteristics. She is conceived as the destroyer of enemies and depicted in fighting mood, fully equipped with arms. This latter feature is absent in the conception of Pārvatī or Umā, with whom Durgā is often identified, who belong to the benign group of goddesses, but abundantly present in the conceptions of Caṇḍikā, Kālī and others, the goddesses belonging to the terrible group,

with whom Durgā is also frequently identified. It therefore appears that two independent streams, benign and terrible, were later united into one, and the conception of Durgā, covering both the aspects, was a composite one which might have served the purpose of bridging the gap.

A terrible goddess of war is reflected in the character of Caṇḍikā or Kauśikī, the heroine of the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. It is interesting to note that this Caṇḍikā is not Śiva's consort and nowhere is she associated with him. She is Viṣṇumāyā and worshipped as Nārāyaṇī. She is purely a war goddess, having no function other than slaying the demons. The stream introduced by Caṇḍikā was further developed in the conception of Kālī. Originally a powerful tribal goddess she was adopted into the Brahmanical religion and identified with the goddess dwelling in the Himalayas. In the *Devīmāhātmya* she is also identified with Cāmuṇḍā on account of her slaying the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. Grammatically, however, Cāmuṇḍā cannot be derived from Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, and this suggests that she was a different goddess later identified with Kālī.

In many of the Purāṇas, the Devī is primarily the war-goddess who not only confers victory and success on her worshippers in the battle field, but also actually participates in the war to deliver the world, whenever it is oppressed by the demons.[145] When the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha became too powerful, the Devī, born as the offspring of Yaśodā and dwelling in the Vindhyas, destroyed them both. This goddess, identified with Kauśīkī or Caṇḍikā in the *Devīmāhātmya* is also known as Indirā, Kamalā, Lakṣmī, Śrī, Ekānaṃsā and Yoganidrā.[146] Again having become incarnate in the horrifying form of Raktadantikā, she slew and devoured the demons of the Vipracitti lineage and her teeth became red like the inside of a pomegranate. This goddess is also known as Raktacāmuṇḍā and Yogeśvarī.[147] According to the *Durgābhaktitaraṅgiṇī* of Vidyāpati her symbol is *Dāḍima* or pomegranate. We have seen that red is the symbol of fertility with which the Mother Goddesses are frequently connected.[148] The same holds good also in the case of pomegranate.[149] According to the Puranic accounts, after a drought lasting for hundred years, she reappeared as Śatākṣī at the invocation of the sages and nourished

the whole world with the life-sustaining vegetables which grew out of her own body, and thus she became famous as Śākambharī.

Nīlakaṇṭha in his commentary on the *Devībhāgavata*[150] holds that Śatākṣī, Śākambharī and Durgā are the names of the same vegetation deity. Śākambharī, the vegetative substratum of the war goddess, is also identified with Umā, Gaurī, Satī, Caṇḍī and Pārvatī. She is also identified with Sītā in her three forms—Śrī, Bhūmi and Nīlā.[151] She is worshipped in Śākambharī-pīṭha near Saharanpur and is also the presiding goddess of the Sambhar lake and the tutelary deity of the Chauhans. According to the Puranic accounts, in her next incarnation the goddess slew a demon called Durgama and became great as Durgā.[152] She is mentioned only once in the *Devīmāhātmya*[153] in the Mahiṣāsura episode. In the *Kālikāpurāṇa*,[154] she is identified with Bhadrakālī and Ugracaṇḍā. Her other forms were Bhīmādevī and Bhrāmarī. Assuming the terrible shape of the former she killed the Rākṣasas on the Mount Himavat. The goddess Bhīmā and her shrine in the Gandhāra region is mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang.[155] Bhīmāsthana or the holy resort of the goddess in the Himalayan region is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.[155] This goddess is also known as Ekavīrā and Kālarātri.[156] As Bhrāmarī, the goddess killed the demon Aruṇākṣa. A goddess named Bhramaravāsinī is mentioned in Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*.[157] According to the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, this goddess was worshipped at Janasthāna. We also find one Bhramarāmbā worshipped on the Śrīparvata in the Ballamalur range to the south of the Krishna.

The metamorphosis of the Earth and Corn Mothers into War Goddesses, for which one finds ample testimony in the Purāṇas, requires some explanation. According to R.P. Chanda:

> The demon Mahiṣa, and afterwards, Śumbha and Niśumbha, deprived Indra and other gods like Agni, Vāyu, Varuṇa, Candra, Yama, Kuvera of their possessions and their portions of the sacrifice. The goddess Caṇḍikā slaughtered these demons and restored the gods to their dominions and shares of sacrifices. This incarnation of the goddess *to accomplish the purpose of the gods* who were Puranic representations of the Vedic nature gods, is but a fiction to

> connect Vedic polytheism with Śākta monotheism. The legends relating to Devī's slaying the demons are evidently nature myths . . . . Durgā as Śākambharī is the vegetation spirit or Corn Mother, and the demons Mahiṣa and Śumbha and Niśumbha are demons of drought.[158]

Chanda further argues that in the later versions of the Rāmāyaṇic legends, as found in the Purāṇas, the goddess is invoked by Rāma for bringing about the death of Rāvaṇa, but this legend connecting the worship of Durgā in autumn with Rāma's slaying of Rāvaṇa is unknown to the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki. The legend was thus evidently invented to explain the transformation of Durgā as the vegetation spirit to the war goddess.[159]

To account for this metamorphosis something may be suggested. Agricultural communities, even today, have to live in a state of uncertainty. In addition to flood, drought and other natural calamities, they also have to contend with the oppression of the privileged class, the landlords, moneylenders and others. Perhaps these persons were represented in the conception of the demons vanquished by the goddess. The goddess must fight against natural disasters and against the privileged class in order to secure the agricultural yields for her worshipper. In fact everywhere tyranny and oppression have given rise to the ethical concept of the conflict between good and evil and the final triumph of the former over the latter. This must have something to do with the Devī's fight against the demons.

It is also to be remembered in this connection that the cult of the Mother Goddess belonged to the exclusive domain of the oppressed classes and that it was originally looked down upon by peoples belonging to the upper strata of society. The story of Cand Sadāgar and Manasā clearly shows that the upper class was reluctant to accept the Mother Goddess as an object of devotion and worship. This is substantiated also by historical evidence according to which the cult of the Mother Goddess was not popular among the upper classes before the medieval period. When the upper class required the active assistance of the lower on different occasions the situation demanded at least a show of cultural identity of the two sections. Accordingly, some of the cults and rituals of the simpler peoples were adopted

by the higher, but not in their original unsophisticated form. They were given an aristocratic tinge, as we find in the case of the goddess Durgā.

THE GODDESSES OF MOUNTAINS, LAKES AND RIVERS

From the Middle Minoan times, the pre-Hellenic Mother Goddess was worshipped, along with her other forms, as the Lady of the Mountain. On some seals and signets she is represented as the Lady of the Mountain standing between rampant lions. At Knossos she is herself elevated on a mountain wearing the typical Minoan flounced skirt, holding a lance or sceptre and flanked by lions.[160] Such Mountain-goddesses are also found in different parts of the world. So far as the Indian Mother Goddess is concerned, the names Haimavati, Girijā, Śailasutā, Śailaputrī, Vindyavāsinī, Mandaravāsinī, etc., point to her association with the hills. Here we shall refer to Umā-Haimavatī who is one of the most important Mother Goddesses of India. It is difficult to determine her original character, because in her present form she is a composite deity. The name Umā is of non-Sanskritic origin. It appears that the name was originally associated with Ma or Amma denoting 'mother' (Cf. the goddess Ma of Cappadocia) which was also an epithet of the Chaldean Mother Goddess who was identified with Ishtar. 'The Babylonian word for Mother is Umma or Umā, the Akkadian Ummi, and the Dravidian is Amma. These words can be connected with each other and with Umā, the Mother Goddess'.[161] In the Kuṣāṇa coins we find a goddess called Ommo. Umā thus resembles the goddesses of other countries not only in form but in name as well. Mention of this goddess is first met with in the *Kenopaniṣad*[162] in which she is described as an abstract goddess who imparted *brahmavidyā* to Indra. It is difficult to say whether the Umā of the said work is same as that of the *Kumārasambhava* or of the Purāṇas. It is perhaps due to her Upanisadic epithet Hamavatī that in later works she has been identified with Pārvatī and Durgā. The names of these goddesses emphasize their relation with inaccessible mountain regions. The word Pārvatī occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,[163] though not in the sense of a mountain deity. The Purāṇas mention several

mountain resorts of the Mother Goddess. She lives as Śiva in the Himalayas, as Mañgalā in the Vindhyas, as Nandā in the Malaya mountains, as Bhairavī in the Kiṣkindhyā hills, as Mahālakṣmī in the Kola mountains, as Kālarātri in the Sahyādri range and as Ambā in the Gandhamādana hills.[164]

In the *Kubjikā-tantra*, the Vindhyan region is referred to as one of the Siddhapīṭhas. This region is undoubtedly associated with the celebrated non-Vedic goddess Vindhyavāsinī whose temple stands near modern Mirzapur in U.P. Tradition says that near Vindhyācala the head of the Vindhya lies prostrate in worship of this goddess, while his feet are Chunar and Rajmahal. A different version of the story places one foot at Gaya. In the *Mahābhārata* (IV.6), the Vindhyan region is said to have been the permanent abode of the Mother Goddess. The *Harivaṃśa* also refers to the Mother Goddess as residing in the Vindhyas and worshipped by such non-Vedic tribes as the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas. In the Purāṇas, Vindhyāvasinī is identified with Kauśikī, Kātyāyanī and Nandā. In the *Matsya Purāṇa* (XIII. 32, 39, 43) Kālī in the Kālañjara mountain, Caṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhyas are mentioned as the different manifestations of the Devī.

Hills or mountain peaks roughly resembling a human phallus were regarded in India as the *svayambhū* (natural) *liṅga* of Śiva. A pair of hills or peaks of the shape and position of female breasts appear sometimes to have been likewise regarded as the *stana* (breast) of the goddess. Reference may be made in this connection to Kālidāsa's description of the Malaya and Dardura mountains in the Pāṇḍya country as the two breasts of the lady.[165] There is also reason to believe that tanks, pools or lakes and springs were often conceived as the *Yoni* of the Mother Goddess who is also the guardian deity of the lakes. The lakes of Nainīṭal, Sambhar, etc., were designated after the names of the Mother Goddess. Great importance is attached by the Indians to a bath in the *yoni-kuṇḍa* and to the drinking of the water of the *stanakuṇḍa*. The *Mahābhārata* mentions *yonikuṇḍas* at the Bhīmāsthāna near the Pañcanada (Punjab) and on the hill or mountain-peak called Udayatparvata and a *stanakuṇḍa* on the peak known as Gaurīśikhara.[166] The name Gaurīśikhara literally means the peak of Gaurī, the Mother Goddess.[467]

Just as a pair of hills of the shape and position of female

breasts appear to have been likewise regarded as the *stana* or breasts of the Mother Goddess, so also the water coming out of the springs (*Kuṇḍa*) of such hills and also from the rivers issuing out of them is taken to be the milk of the Mother Goddess. In fact rivers are connected with the Mother Goddess cult from time immemorial. Barring a few like the Sindhu or the Brahmaputra, which are described as males and in masculine term (*nada*), the rivers are generally conceived as females and are regarded as Mother Goddesses. Of all such rivers, Gaṅgā has the topmost place. She is always invoked with the qualifying epithet Mother, and her name itself has become the epithets of most of the sacred rivers of India. The story of her descent from heaven and miraculous achievements has been the favourite theme of the writers of Puranic literature. Narmadā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, etc. are also worshipped as Mother Goddesses.

THE BLOOD-THIRSTY GODDESSES

Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Kādambarī*[168] has mentioned the goddess of the Śabaras who was worshipped with human sacrifices. We find her again in the *Harṣacarita*.[169] The *Gauḍavaha* of Vākpati[170] identifies Vindhyavāsinī with Kālī or Pārvatī, associates her with the Kols and Śabaras and refers to human sacrifices offered to her. In Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* we have reference to the blood-thirsty goddess Bhagavatī or Kātyayanī of Kusumapura. In the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti we come across the idea of human sacrifice before the goddess. It speaks of a woman styled Yoginī who performed the *Kāpālikavrata* at the Śrīparvata and illustrates the *vrata* by the horrible activities of Aghoraghaṇṭa and his female disciple Kapālakuṇḍalā who are represented as coming from the Śrīparvata and staying near the *Mahāśmasāna*, at Padmāvati in the Gwalior state, containing a temple of Cāmuṇḍā to whom they were going to offer the girl Mālatī in sacrifice. According to a story found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*,[171] Jīmūtavāhana was captured by robbers who led him to a temple of Durgā in a Śabara village to sacrifice him to the goddess. Similar reference to a human sacrifice to the

goddess Caṇḍikā is found in another story.[172]

Gait has given an interesting account of the ceremonies conducted at the opening of the restored temple of Kāmākhyā in Assam:

> When the new temple of Kāmākhyā was opened, the occasion was celebrated by the immolation of no less than a hundred and forty men, whose heads were offered to the goddess on salvers made of copper. According to the *Haft Iqlim*, there was in Kāmarūpa a class of persons called *bhogis* who were voluntary victims. From the time when they announced that the goddess had called them, they were treated as privileged persons; they were allowed to do whatever they liked, and every woman was at their command; but when the annual festival came round, they were killed.[173]

The following note on the religious life of the Chutiyas of Assam is significant:

> The religion of the Chutiyas was a curious one. They worshipped various forms of Kālī with the aid not of the Brāhmaṇas but of their tribal priests or Deoris. The favourite form in which they worshipped this deity was that of Kesai Khati 'the eater of raw flesh' to whom human sacrifices were offered. After their subjugation by the Ahoms, the Deoris were permitted to continue their ghastly rites; but they were usually given, for the purpose, criminals who had been sentenced to capital punishment. If none were available, victims were taken from a particular clan, which in return was accorded certain privileges. The person selected was fed sumptuously, until he was plump to suit the supposed taste of the goddess, and then he was decapitated at the copper temple at Sadia or at some other shrine of the tribe. Human sacrifices were also formerly offered by the Tipperas, Kacharis, Koches, Jaintias and other Assam tribes.[174]

According to the popular tradition of Rājasthan, King Lāṅgā of Mewar sacrificed his nine sons before the goddess Cāmuṇḍā,

but the unappeased hunger of the goddess at last needed the head of the old king himself.[175]

It is interesting to note that in India it is the Mother Goddess alone who needs blood sacrifices. Of all the higher religions, it is only Śāktism and its offshoots, which are developments of the primitive Mother Goddess cults, that require sacrifices—human and animal. In Bengal, the goddess Kālī is generally worshipped with animal sacrifices. Human sacrifices were originally offered to the Dākātīyā Kālīs (the Kālī of the Robbers) whose shrines are still found at Bijpur near Kanchrapara in the 24-Parganas, at Bangaon on the Ichamati, at Baghati near Tribeṇī in the Hooghly district and at many places. In the villages of Eastern Bengal there are places called *kholā* (Cf. *thāna* of West Bengal) sacred to the goddess Jayadurgā who is propitiated with animal sacrifice. Jayadurgā of Koṭālipāḍā in the Faridpur district is a popular deity of Eastern Bengal. According to the Dharma-maṅgalas, Jayadurgā is worshipped at Phulā, Dikani and Tārāmapura. A goddess of the same name is the presiding deity of the Vaidyanātha-pīṭha. At Dhamrai near Dacca on the river Baṁsī the goddess Vanadurgā is worshipped with pig-sacrifice. At Rasapur in the Howrah district, as well as in some villages of the Hooghly district, the goddess Vindhya-vāsinī is worshipped with buffalo-sacrifice.

The villagers of Orissa worship an animistic goddess of their own, Pañca-Khaṇḍā, with offerings of he-goats, fowls, and rice commanded by the performers of the sacrifice.[176] The village deities are, as a rule, females, and are known by the title Grāmadevatī or Ṭhākurāṇī. Each village has one of its own and her status is officially recognised.[177] She is generally worshipped under the shade of a tree.[178] The deity of the Chilkā lake is Kālijai who is said to have been an incarnation of Kālī.[179] To the goddess Bhaṭṭakārikā Berembā human-sacrifices were formerly offered.[180] The Ṭhākurāṇī cult with blood-sacrifices is prevalent among the Aruvas of Berhampur in the Ganjam district.[181] The Bavuris[182] and Bhondaris[183] of the same district have also Ṭhākurāṇī cults. The Ṭhākurāṇīs of the Bosantiyas[184] are known by such names as Kotaru or Caṇḍī, of the Dandasis[185] as Sankaithuni Kulladankuni, Kombesari, Kālimukhi, etc., of the Haddis[186] as Kalumukhi, Sathabavuni, Baidaro, etc., and so on. The Ṭhākurāṇīs of the Bhuniyas,

Bendkars or Sabaras of Keonjhar,[187] are blood-thirsty, once worshipped even with human sacrifices. Of these Ṭhākurāṇīs, Bensuri is especially important.[188]

In different parts of South India, the goddess Durgā is worshipped with blood sacrifice. Several panels of Durgā of the Pallava period portray devotee offering his own head by cutting it off piece by piece. The *Maṇimakalai* speaks of Durgā temple in which there was a sacrificial altar surrounded by posts with truncated heads dangling from it.[189] According to the popular tradition, the goddess Kāmākṣī of Kāñci was originally blood-thirsty, but it was Śaṅkarācārya who propitiated her, and since then her character was changed. The South Indian village Mothers are almost universally worshipped with animal sacrifices.[190]

In Bengal, Kālī is worshipped as a protectress deity (Rakṣākālī) generally on the cross-roads. In Śūdraka's *Mṛcchakaṭika* we have reference to Cārudatta's sacrifice to the Mothers at the cross-roads. Major cross-roads were most favoured for meritorious public works. In a Jātaka story[191] we find that king Pasenadi of Kosala was terrified by sixteen ominous dreams in a single night, and the Brahmins advised him to make extensive blood sacrifices at every cross-ways. After an extensive enquiry Kosambi came to the conclusion that the cross-ways were the original sites of the Mother Goddess cults. From the Stone Age, these were places where the Mothers were normally worshipped by primitive peoples whose nomad tracts met at the junction. Some of these tracts later developed into trade-routes. Traders setting out on their travels made animal sacrifices to some deity and vowed to make more if the journey were profitable. Cārudatta, who was the son of a Sārthavaha and resident of a merchant's quarter must have known the travelling merchant's custom to salute and, if possible, sacrifice, to the Mother Goddess encountered during a voyage.[192]

THE TRIBAL DIVINITIES

Much of the cult of the tribal Mothers has been discussed in the preceding sections. Here we shall deal mainly with the literary evidence connected with tribal cults. The earliest

peoples, as we have seen above, were hunters and food-gatherers, and in this stage there was no class division, owing to the very low level of production. In the Vedic texts we have references to such peoples, and the post-Vedic literature refers to their cults and beliefs. In the *Harivaṁśa*,[193] the Mother Goddess is described as worshipped especially by the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas. In the *Mahābhārata*,[194] she is described as residing in the Vindhyas and fond of spirituous liquor and flesh. In the *Gauḍavaha*[195] of Vākpati she is addressed as Śabarī, i.e., a Śabara woman. In the *Varāhapurāṇa*[196] she is addressed as Kirātinī or Kirāta woman. One of her rituals is called *Śābarotsava*, i.e., the festival of Śabaras. Who were these peoples among whom the cult of the Mother Goddess developed especially?

The *Pañca-Kṛṣṭi* of the *Ṛgveda* has been explained by Yāska[197] as *pañca-manuṣyajātāni*, five classes of men, which included the four *varṇas* with the Niṣādas as the fifth. Of the eight tribes associated with the Niṣādas, as we find in the Rudrādhyāya of the *Yajurveda*,[198] four (Vrāta, Puñjiṣṭha, Svanin and Mṛgayu) were directly hunters, while others (Takṣan, Rathakāra, Kulāla and Karmāra) unable to maintain themselves by hunting had to settle in the Vedic society as members of the lower castes on the basis of some occupation. The working of such a social process can be seen in India even today. It is interesting to note that *ni* means 'down' and *sad* means 'to settle'. The commentator Mahīdhara explains the word Niṣāda occurring in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*[199] as denoting a Bhilla or Bhil. In the *Mahābhārata*[200] it is stated that the Niṣādas, and also many riteless tribes of Vindhyan region, sprang from the right thigh of the wicked king Veṇa. In the Purāṇas[201] the Niṣādas are described as black, low-statured, short-armed, having cheek bones, low-tipped nose, red eyes and copper-coloured hair. They lived especially on hunting. The Buddhist Jātakas also describe them as hunters and foresters.[202]

The *Padmapurāṇa*[203] mentions the Kirātas, Bhillas, Nāhalakas, Bhramaras, Pulindas, and other tribes as descedants of the Niṣādas. In the medieval Sanskrit literature, tribes of the Vindhya hills, belonging to the Niṣāda stock according to the Purāṇas, are called Śabaras, Pulindas and Kirātas. In the

Harṣacarita[204] we have a beautiful description of the physical character of a Śabara youth. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,[205] the Śabaras are described as wild tribes, dependent on hunting and are classed as Dasyus with the Andhras, Pulindas, Mutibas and Puṇḍras. The land inhabited by the Śabaras are located to the south of the Vindhyas according to the Puranic lists of Janapadas. Even today, a tribe called Saora is found in the Eastern Ghats. In the lexicon of Yādavaprakāśa, the Śabaras are counted among the Deccan tribes. Ptolemy[206] locates the Sabarai or the Śabaras to the north of the Vindhyas towards the Ganges, i.e., on the modern road from Rewa to Mirzapur. In the Jain lists of the Janapadas, the Śabaras are described as *mleccha* peoples and their territory is mentioned along with those of the Kirātas, Draviḍas, Pulindas and others.

Like the Śabaras, the Pulindas were also hunting tribes of the Deccan.[207] Ptolemy refers to them (Poulindai) as Agriophagoi (tribe subsisting on raw flesh, roots and wild fruits).[208] The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[209] mentions the Pulindas along with the Andhras, and both of the tribes are mentioned in an inscription of Aśoka. The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*[210] refers to them especially as a tribe (Pulinda-gaṇa) while the Purāṇas describe them as foresters.[211] It appears from the literary and epigraphic evidence that there were several branches of the Pulindas, viz., a western branch, a Himalayan branch related to the Kirātas and Ṭaṅganas and a southern branch.[212] According to the *Kathāsaritsāgara*,[213] the territory of the Pulindas was situated in the Vindhyas on the route which went from Kosambi to Ujjayini. It appears that the term Pulinda was later applied to any hunting people. This is supported by the evidence of the Buddhist literature in which even the wild tribes of Ceylon like the Veddas were identified with the Pulindas.[214] The Poulindai Agriophagoi of Ptolemy recalls the Agriophagoi and Moschophagoi of the *Periplus* and also the Ichthyophagoi or tribes subsisting on fish described by most classical writers.[215] Of the Indian tribes mentioned by Herodotus,[216] the Padaeans were nomads living on raw flesh, while others, inhabiting the marsh countries by the river Indus, subsisted on fish. He also mentioned a few other tribes, though not by name, who were still in a pre-hunting stage.[217]

The term Kirāta had also a wider denotation. In the Puranic

lists of Janapadas, tribes belonging to the Kirāta group are mentioned as dwelling in the Udīcya or Uttarāpatha region and also in the Parvatāśraya or the Himalayan region. In the *Vājasaneyī Samhitā*[218] they are mentioned as Himalayan mountainers. The *Periplus*[219] refers to the Kirātas (Kirrhadia) living to the north of Dosarene (Tosali in the Puri-Cuttack region) as savages with flattened noses and also the horse-faced and long-faced tribes (Cf. the Aśvamukha and Dīrghāsya of the Purāṇas) subsisting on raw meat (*Puruṣāda*, cf. the term *Kravyād*, eaters of raw flesh, of the *Atharva-Veda*[220] and the Agriophagoi mentioned above). Ptolemy locates the Airrhadoi,[221] a Kirāta tribe, living in the coastal region beyond the mouth of the Ganges. He also refers to a country of the Kirātas (Kirrhadia) near the Mount Maiandros.[222] The Andhras, living in the tract between the Krishnā and the Godāvarī were also hunting tribes mentioned along with the Puṇḍras, Śabaras, Pulindas and Mutibas in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.[223] The Mutibas, also called Mucipas and Mubipas, lived in different parts of northern India, while the Puṇḍras or Pauṇḍras in eastern India.

In view of what has been stated above, it is now clear that the ancient hunting tribes of India were scattered in different regions and that the terms Śabara, Pulinda. Kirāta, etc., originally denoted the hunting tribes in general. It was among these peoples that the cult of the Mother Goddess had a prominent position. Their descendants also, who survive to this day in different parts of the country, follow the same religious tradition. Many tribes again have become completely Hinduized and having lost their original tribal character now belong to lower strata of Hindu society. With the development of agriculture and cattle-rearing, numerous tribes that previously subsisted on hunting and food-gathering came under the new system of production and became settled in villages as agriculturists or followers of other occupations. Most of the village deities were thus originally tribal deities. Bishop Whitehead, after an extensive enquiry into the names, characteristics and functions of the village deities of South India, has summed up the matter as follows: (i) They symbolize the village life and are related, not to the great world forces but to such simple facts as cholera, smallpox, cattle-disease, etc. (ii) The village deities, with very few exceptions, are females and are almost

universally worshipped with animal sacrifices. (iii) The priests are not Brāhmaṇas, but are drawn from all other castes. (iv) The names of the village deities are legion, some of them having an obvious meaning and many quite unintelligible to the peoples themselves. They differ almost in every district and often the deities worshipped in one village are quite unknown in other villages five or six miles off. (v) The characters of the goddesses vary considerably. The villagers do not regard them as evil spirits, but neither do they regard them as unmixed benefactors. (vi) The functions of the different goddesses are not at all very clearly marked. (vii) In many villages the shrine is simply a rough stone platform under a tree, and in many cases there is no permanent shrine at all. (viii) In some villages there is no permanent image or symbol, a clay figure of the goddess being made for each festival. Very often the goddess is represented simply by a stone pillar or by a brass pot filled with water. (ix) There is no ecclesiastical calendar regulating the festivals or forms of worship. In many places, however, there is a fixed annual festival which generally takes place after the harvest.[224]

The Aherias of Uttar Pradesh, who formerly lived on hunting, have a cult of Mother Goddess whom they call simply Devī.[225] The Ahirs who are new agricultural and pastoral castes worship Śiva and Devī. They are now scattered in different parts of India. In Mirzapur, the goddess is Vindhyavāsinī. The Ahirs of Bengals are mainly Vaiṣṇavite. Among the Ahirs of the Deccan, the Mother Goddess is popular. Among the Oraons, Sarṇā Burhī, 'the old woman of the grove' is worshipped. She corresponds to the Jahir Era and Desauli of the Mundas. She is also called Jhakra-Burhī. The Oraons also worship Mother Earth as wife of the God Dharma and Caṇḍa or Caṇḍī who is a goddess of hunting.[226] Among the Bhuiyas of Singhbhum and Lohardaga, Ṭhākurāṇī Māi, 'the blood-thirsty goddess' has now become a form of Durgā or Kālī.[227] Among the Birhors, Mahāmāyā is supposed to be the daughter of the Hindu Devī. A trident painted red is also worshipped by them as the monkey-god Hanumān who is believed to be an officer of the goddess.[228] Among the Bediyas, the goddess is worshipped under such names as Devī, Kālī, Jvālāmukhī, etc.[229] Lohāsur Devī is especially worshipped by the Agarias. Agars or Agaris

with animal sacrifice offered by the Bagia priests. The goddess presides over the smelting furnace.[230] Among the Kharwars of Palamau, the goddess Canda is worshipped and among those of other parts of Bihar and U.P., the special goddesses are Dharti (Earth Mother), Purgahaili or Daknai, Jvālāmukhi and Aṅgārmati (War-goddess).[231] The Kharwars of Chotanagpur have the cult of the goddess Muckak Rāṇī.[232] The Birhors of Hazaribagh worship Banhi, goddess of the Jungles, Lugu, protectress of earth, Buriā-māi, Dudhā-māi, etc. A rod of wood is symbol of their goddess Mahāmāyā.[233] Among the Mundas, Mother Goddess is worshipped under different names.[234] The celebrated Muṇḍeśvarī is evidently a Hindu adaptation of the Munda tribal mother. The Musahars, originally hunting peoples, worship Kālī and also Banaspati. The latter is the Forest Mother who is married to Gansam or Bansgopal. The Kurs of Chotanagpur worship Nāga Bhuiyan, the female earth-serpent.[235] The Kalwars of Bihar and U.P. worship Hinduized goddesses like Kālī, Durgā, Ratmā, etc.[236] Among the Majhwars, Deoharin occupies the village shrine. She is identified with the Hindu Devī and her worship is attended by women. Sacrifices of fowls and goats are offered to her. They also worship Nāgin, the snake-goddess.[237] Among the Mals, Mal Paharias, etc., who are generally agricultural peoples having a wide distribution in different parts of the country, such goddesses as Manasā and others are worshipped. The goddess Siṃhavāhinī is popular among them. The Mal Pahariās worship Dharti Mātā, the Earth Mother, and her sister Garami.[238] Many of the tribes and castes of Bihar and U.P. have their branches in other states of India. As for example, the Aherias of U.P. have also their settlement in Punjab. The Santals of Bihar have also their settlements in different parts of Bengal and it is interesting to note that their goddess Gusain Era has been adopted by some sections of the Bagdi caste of Bengal.[239]

The Śabaras, as we have seen, are scattered over different parts of India. Various forms of Mother Goddess are worshipped by them. The Śabaras of Madhya Pradesh worship her under the name Bhavānī.[240] The Sansis or Sansiyas inhabiting the North-Western regions of the Vindhyan range are more or less Hinduized and they worship the Mother Goddess under the names Kālī, Jvālāmukhi and others.[241] The cult of the Ramoshis

of the South Western regions is devoted mainly to female spirits or mothers associated with the demon leader Vetāla.[242] The Mahars worship Ai Bhavānī whose image they keep in their houses.[243] The smallpox goddess is worshipped under the name Devī or Mātā Devī by them.[244] Among the Gonds, she is also worshipped under the same name, and in her more terrible form she is Danteśvarī.[245] The Chamar castes scattered over the regions to the north of the Vindhyas are worshippers especially of Dharti Mātā, the Earth Mother.[246] The Gowri tribes of Madhya Pradesh worship a mythological ancestress,[247] and this holds good in the case of other matrilineal castes like the Bhunjiyas, Dumals, Kamars, Kawars, Kangars, etc.[248] The Bhils who are also scattered in the Vindhyan region and its adjoining areas worship Mātā, a Mother Goddess represented by symbols like wooden posts, earthen horses, winnowing fans, etc., rather than by images. She is also worshipped under such names as Śītalā, Pārvatī, Vajar, Mātā, etc.[249]

Of the popular goddesses of the tribes of Rajasthan, reference may be made to Mama Devī, mother of the Gods, Annapurṇā, Śākambharī, Mātā Jananī, Āśāpurṇā, etc.[250] The Bhils of Rajasthan have a cult of a divine ancestress.[251] The Corn Mother, Gaurī is associated with wild pig by many a Rajput tribe.[252] In Kathiawar, each Rajput clan has a patron mother. Tuturia mother is served by tribal women in many places of Western India.[253] In the Gujarat region, we come across a lot of shrines dedicated to the local mothers. Bahucharaji, the 'looking-glass' goddess has a shrine at Anjar in Kutch.[254] The Bechrāji shrine of Baroda deserves special mention in this connection. Here a married woman of the Charan or herald caste has been deified as an incarnation of the Mātā or Divine Mother and is worshipped in the form of a *yoni*.[255] Various forms of the Mother Goddess are worshipped by the tribes of Punjab, North Gujarat and Rajasthan.[256] In Punjab we find unmarried girls recognized as the representatives of the Devī. Twice a year, offerings are made to them, as representatives of the goddess. This reminds us of the Kumārī Devī of the Nepalese tribes. There a selected girl is regarded as the living representative of the goddess and she receives the homage and devotion of her worshippers and remains in this elevated position till the commencement of her first menstruation. The

Gujars of Punjab, North Gujarat and Western Rajasthan worship Śītalā and Bhavānī[257] while the Sansis or Sansiyas who have also their settlements in Punjab worship such Hindu goddesses as Devī or Kālī.[258] Kālī or Kālī Bhavānī is also an object of worship among the Bawariyas of Punjab.[259] The Mother Goddess is worshipped simply under the name Devī among the Aherias of the same region.[260]

Among the tribes of the Assam region, the cult of the Mother Goddess is also prominent. The goddess Kāmākhyā of Kāmarūpa, although now regarded as a form of the Supreme Being of the Śāktas, was originally a tribal mother of that region. Her name might have been derived from the Khasi *Ka-Mei Kha*. *Ka* in Khasi means *mother* and *Mei-Kha* means mother-born. Her primitive character is revealed in her *yoni* form in which she is worshipped even today. Among the Abor or Abor Miri living on the banks of the Dihang river, we have the cult of Kilu Deli, the male and female earth spirit.[261] The Ahoms likewise have Lengbin and Lengdin, god and goddess of the Earth.[262] The hill tribes of the northern frontier, like the Khamti, Singhpho, Mishmi, and many of the Abor groups like the Padam, Dophla and others have, however, no specialized Mother Goddess cult. Among the Mikirs, the deities are borrowed mainly from the Khasis, and they have priestesses or shamanesses known as *lodest*. The Lushais also have priestesses of this sort. Among the Manipuris:

> the Maibees are priestesses of an order said to have been instituted many hundreds of years ago by one of the royal princesses. Any woman who chooses to declare herself inspired, may enter upon her novitiate as a priestess, and on her admission may practice on the credulity of the people by divination.[263]

Referring to the Khasis of Meghalaya Lyall remarks:

> In the veneration of ancestors, which is the foundation of tribal piety, the primal ancestress (Ka-iawbei) and her brother are the only persons regarded. The flat memorial stones set up to perpetuate the memory of the dead are called after the woman who represents the clan (*maw Kynthei*), and the

> standing stones ranged behind them are dedicated to the male kinsmen on the mother's side. The powers of sickness and death are all female, and these are most frequently worshipped. The two protectors of the household are goddesses . . . . Priestesses assist at all sacrifices and the male officiants are only their deputies.[264]

The religion of the Garos also shows markedly matriarchal traces.[265]

We have already had occasion to refer to some of the cults of the Orissan tribal Mothers. The Kisans of the Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts worship the Mother Goddess in the form of shapeless stone slabs, wooden masses or trees. Before propitiation of the goddess, the *gunia* or sorcerer, under the influence of intoxicating liquor, determines her requirements. The Bathudis of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, who are now greatly Hinduized, worship such goddesses as Budhipa Ṭhākurāṇī, Basuki, Sundara Gaurī, Khicingesvarī, etc. The goddess Basuki is worshipped before a sowing operation starts. The Omanatyas of the Koraput district worship the village-goddess Ṭhākurāṇī. She is worshipped with sacrifices at the time of the outbreak of such epidemics like smallpox and cholera. The Bhumias of Jeypore worship the goddess Budhi Ṭhākurāṇī on all important occasions. At the centre of the village a platform is raised with a thatched roof on which the goddess is installed. She is worshipped with offerings of cocoanuts, plantains, etc., and also with a goat-sacrifice. During any calamity, the *desari* or priest is employed to propitiate the goddess through sacrifice of goats and fowls. Among the Binjhals, settled in the border region of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, Mulen Devī, represented by a few bangles kept in a corner of the house, is worshipped with offerings of fruits, sweets and sacrifice of fowls and goats. Usually a barren she-goat is offered before the goddess when any woman gets her first child. Dula Devatā, considered as the tutelary family goddess, is worshipped on all important occasions. The goddess Dhulia Pata is represented by some burnt earthen posts anointed with vermilion and some three-headed spears kept inside a shed at the outskirts of the village. The goddess Kambheśvarī is also represented by a wooden post and anointed with vermilion. She is worshipped with offerings of rice, pulses and flesh of goats

and fowls. She is especially worshipped in the *Harali-parva* observed in the month of Āṣāḍha and in the *Karam-yātrā* festival held in the month of Āśvina. Of other goddesses worshipped by the Binjhals reference should be made to Vinduvāsinī and Lakṣmī.[266]

The Sountis of Mayurbhunj worship the Earth Goddess Basukimātā. The presiding deity of their villages is named Grāmadevati Ṭhākurāṇī who is worshipped inside a small shed at the end of the village. They also worship the image of the goddess Duarasuni which is installed at the entrance to each village. Her task is to keep watch over the evil spirits and ward them off. Other goddesses worshipped by them near the embankment of the village tank are Kamalā and Vimalā. The Didayis of Koraput district worship their tribal mother as Ṭhākurānī Mātā. The Mirdhas of Sambalpur and Bolangir have the cults of Durgā and Maṅgala Ṭhākurāṇī. The Desua Bhumijs of Mayurbhanj have also Hinduized cults of Durgā and Kālī. The Jatapus of Koraput worship the goddess Jakari in the form of a shapeless stone with sacrifices of pigs, goats and fowls. The Kolis of Ganjam worship their Mother Goddess as Ṭhākurāṇī. The Kotas of Koraput have a smallpox goddess called Nisaniguda who is worshipped with sacrifices of goats and fowls. The village goddess of the Parengas of Koraput is Nāgeswari. The Pentias of Koraput and Mayurbhanj worship Samalei Ṭhākurāṇī on all important occasions with sacrifice of fowls and offerings of sweets and cocoanuts. The Rajuars of Mayurbhanj worship such Hinduized goddesses as Caṇḍī of different names, Durgā, Kālī, etc., but their original tribal mother is Gan Ṭhākurāṇī whose festival is spent in great merriment with dance, music and drink. The Mahalis of Mayurbhanj worship Badacaṇḍī and Raṅga-caṇḍī who are believed to ward off all infectious diseases. The Matyas who are sparingly distributed in many districts of Orissa worship their village mothers as Grāmadevatī. They also worship some Hinduized goddesses.[267]

Notes

1. Frazer, *GB* (ab), 399-424.
2. *Ibid.*, 420.
3. *Germania*, 40.

4. Grim, *TM*, 250 ff.
5. Squire, *CML*, 48-52, 252.
6. Tylor, *PC*, I. 247-77.
7. Chatterji in *JAS*, 1959, 199 ff.
8. Mackenzie, *MPCA*, 230 ff.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Brinton, *MNW*, 157.
11. Tylor, *PC*, I, 244 ff.
12. Leonard, *LNT*, 347 ff.
13. Edkins, *RC*, 151.
14. Mackenzie, *MCJ*, 152.
15. Colebrooke, *ME*, 1. 220.
16. Hopkins, *RI*, 532.
17. Roy, *OC*, 142, 441 f.
18. *FL*, XXX, 282 ff.; *JAS*, XX. 106 ff.; Farnell, *CGS*, III. 26, 112. 205.
19. Elliot, *SR*, 125.
20. *NINQ*, I. 173.
21. *Ibid.*, 41.
22. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, I. 83.
23. Crooke, *PRFLNI*, 32.
24. Macpherson, *MSI*, 117.
25. Playfair, *G*, 93.
26. Crooke in *JR AnI* XIX, 237 ff.
27. Cf. Roy in *JAnSB*, XII. 920-21.
28. Crooke, *PRFLNI*, 69.
29. *NINQ*, I. 210.
30. *GB* (ab), 62-78.
31. Tod, *AAR*, I. 570 f.
32. *Ibid.*, 572.
33. Frazer, *AAO*, 194 ff.
34. Dalton, *DEB*, 259.
35. *IA*, XXV, 114; Thurston, *ENSI*, 2.
36. Atkinson, *HDNWP*, II. 870.
37. *BG*, XX. 454.
38. *Ibid.*, 443, 460.
39. Crooke, *PRFLNI*, 294.
40. Murray-Aunsley in *FL*, V. 253 ff.
41. *BG*, IX (1), 392.
42. Gupte, *HHC*, 181 ff.
43. Glotz, *AC*, 245.
44. Nilsson. *MMR*, 130.
45. Licht, *SLAG*, 194-95.
46. Frazer, *GB*, (ab), 5 ff.
47. Galey, *CM*, 204.
48. Farnell, *CGS*, I. 244 f.
49. ERE, VII. 428-34.
50. II. 17-18.
51. Mackenzie, *CPHE*, 169.

52. *Mbh.*, III. 227.
53. Majumdar, *GSIM*, II. 98 ff.
54. Hargreaves, *HSPM*, 44, 50, pl. VII; Marshall, *BAG*, 84 pl. cxii.
55. *ARASI*, 1911-12, 107; fig 16; pl. XLI.
56. *Ibid.*, 1909-10, 133;
57. Crooke *TCNPWO*, II. 177 ff.
58. See *MI*, XXVIII, 1948, 152 ff.
59. *Prakṛtikhaṇḍa* XLIII; cf. *Devībhāgavata*, IX. 26.
60. *Mbh.*, III. 223-28.
61. *ERE*, V. 827; cf. Farnell, *GB*, 82 ff; Frazer, *AAO*, 128 ff; Jastrow, *RBA*, 140 ff; King, *BRM*, 10 ff; etc.
62. Nilsson, *MMR*, 487 ff.
63. James, *CMG*, 213.
64. V. 3. 21-25.
65. *ASR*, IX, 54, 58.
66. LXIII. 51-52.
67. Tod, *AAR*, I. 96 ff.
68. *ASR*, V. 172.
69. Elliot, *HI*, III. 318.
70. Jarrett, *AA*, II. 317 f.
71. XXX. 3-9.
72. *ASR*, I. 253.
73. *AC*, 245.
74. Nilsson, *MMR*, 503 ff.
75. Frazer, *GB*, (ab) 5 ff.
76. Raychaudhuri in *DRBV*, 301 ff.
77. Frazer, *AAO*, 105-06.
78. *Ibid.*, 131.
79. Viṣṇu, III. 8.
80. Vāyavīya, XXI-XXIII.
81. Frazer, *AAO*, 217.
82. Hutton, *CI*, 152.
83. Bhattacharyya, *JI*, 172.
84. Russell, *TCCPI*, I. 365, III. 141.
85. *Ibid.*, III, 12, 30, 37.
86. Atkinson, *HD*, I. 828 f.
87. Iyer, *MTC*, I. 84.
88. Sen, *HBLL*, 252 ff.
89. Hutton, *CI*, 152 n.
90. *ERE*, XI. 399 f.
91. Luard, *ESCI*, I. 175.
92. Tod, *AAR*, I. 80 f; II. 661; III. 1381.
93. Cunningham, *ASR*, XVII. 141.
94. Thurston, *EN*, II. 102, 238.
95. Cunningham, *ASR*, I. 75.
96. Lyall, *GB*, 191 f.
97. Cunningham, *ASR*, I. 15.
98. Whitehead, *VGSI*, 29.

99. Hornblower in *JEA*, XV (1929), 39.
100. Levy, *GH*, 116.
101. Frazer, *AAO*, 106, 300, 319.
102. Gadd in *UE*, I. 142 ff.
103. Robertson-Smith, *RS*, 406.
104. Thomson, *AA*, 21.
105. Jolly, *IM*, 139.
106. *ASIAR*, 1908-09, 109.
107. Sastri, *DLBB*, 20.
108. Banerjea, *DHI*, 383.
109. *ASIAR*, 1922-23, 115; Bhattasali, *IBBSDM*, 59, 61, pl. 23 b.
110. *IHQ*, XV, 104-05.
111. Crooke in *ERE*, II. 485.
112. Webster, *EBADGN*, 34-35.
113. O'Malley, *BDGK*, 61.
114. *QJMS*, XLIII, 55.
115. *ASIAR*, 1905-06, 14.
116. Russell, *TCCPI*, II. 14.
117. *QJMS*, XLIII. 55.
118. *JASB*, LXV, 33.
119. *IA*, VIII, 211.
120. *QJMS*, XLIII, 55.
121. Vasu, *ASM*, I, XCVII.
122. *MRI*, 70-80.
123. JAnSB, XII. 829.
124. Whitehead, *VGSI* 22.
125. *Ibid.*, 21.
126. *Ibid.*, 29.
127. *Ibid.*, 74.
128. *Ibid.*, 31-32.
129. *Ibid.*, 117.
130. Chaudhuri, in *IC*, VII, 422.
131. O'Malley, *CR*, *BBAS*, 1911; I. 228.
132. Whitehead, *VGSI*, 21, 71.
133. *Ibid.*, 48 ff.
134. *ERE*, II. 485.
135. Martin, *GI*, 255-56.
136. *NINQ*, III. 107.
137. Crooke, *RFNI*, 322.
138. Russell, *TCCPI*, II. 87.
139. Luard, *ESCI*, 49.
140. Enthoven, *TCB*, I. 334 f.
141. Tod, *AAR*, III. 1733 ff.
142. Levi in *AJA*, XLX, 298.
143. James, *CMG*, 146.
144. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XVIII. 16.
145. *Devi M.*, XI. 41-54; *Vāmana P.*, LVI. 67-70.
146. *Hari V.*, LVII; *Br.S.*, LVIII. 38-39; *Bhāg. P.*, X 2. 29.

147. *Varāha P*, XCVI; *Matsya P.*, CCLXI; *Mālatimādhava*, V.
148. Briffault, *M.*, II. 412 ff; Thomson, *SAGS*, I. 209 ff; Mackay, *FEM*, I. 259 ff.
149. See Frazer, *AAO*, 217.
150. VII. 28. 21-30.
151. See *Śītopaniṣad*, XIII.
152. Cf. *Devī Bh.*, VII. 28; also *Skanda Pu.*, Kāśi, LXXI-LXXII.
153. IV. ii.
154. LX. 118-19.
155. III. 82. 83-85
156. *Devī Bh.*, VII. 30; *Skanda Pu*, Kumārikā XXXIX; Uttara LXXXI.
157. Stein *RT*, II, 279 ff.
158. *IAR*, 69.
159. *Ibid.*, 70.
160. Evans, *PM*, IV. 559.
161. Dikshit, *MG*, 59.
162. III. 25.
163. I. 5.15.17.
164. *Devī Pu.*, XXXVIII.
165. *Raghuvaṃśa*, IV. 51.
166. III. 82. 83-85; III. 84. 93-95; 151-53.
167. Sircar, *SP*. 8-9.
168. Pūrvabhāga/Kathāmukha.
169. VIII.
170. 285-347.
171. Tawney, *OS*, II, Ch. 22.
172. *Ibid.*, I. Ch. 10.
173. Gait, *HA*, 56.
174. *Ibid.*, 42.
175. Mitra, *IA*, 61.
176. Risley, *TCB*, II. 267 ff.
177. Gait, *CI*, 1901, (Bengal), I. 260 n.
178. *JASB*, LXII, 81.
179. *JAnSB*, I. 190.
180. *Ibid.*, XV, 76.
181. Thurston, *CTSI*, I. 60.
182. *Ibid.*, 180.
183. *Ibid.*, 230.
184. *Ibid.*, 264.
185. *Ibid.*, II. 108.
186. *Ibid.*
187. Dalton, *DEB*, 147-49.
188. Russell *TCCPI*, IV. 500 ff; Risley, *TCB*, II. 241 ff.
189. Menon in *SAKCV*, 234-39.
190. Whitehead, *VGSI*, 23 ff.
191. No. 77.
192. *MR*, 82-109.
193. LVIX.

194. IV. 6.
195. 305.
196. XXVIII. 34.
197. *Nirkuta*, III. 8; X. 3; cf. *Bṛhaddevatā*, VII. 69.
198. For the Vedic references to the Niṣādas see *Taitt. Sam.*, IV. 5.4.2; *Kath. Sam.*, XVII. 13; *Mait. Sam.*, XVI. 27; *Ait. Br.* VIII. 11; *Pañca. Br.* XVI. 6.8.
199. XVI. 27; XXX. 8.
200. XII. 59.94-97.
201. *Viṣṇu*, I. 13; *Bhāgavata*, IV. 14.44.
202. IV.413; V. 110.333.
203. II. 27. 42-43.
204. Tr. Cowell and Thomas, 230.
205. VII. 18; cf. *Śāṅ. S.S.*, XV. 26.6.
206. VII. 1.80.
207. *Mbh.* XII. 207.42; *Matsya Pu*, cxiv. 46-48; *Vāyu Pu.*, XLV. 48.
208. VII. 1.64.
209. VII. 18; cf. *Śāṅ. S.S.* XV. 26.
210. IV. 22; V. 39. 77-78; IX. 17. 29. 40; XVI. 2.33.
211. Cf. *Mārkaṇḍeya*, LVII. 47.
212. *EI*, I. 334 ff; IV. 40. ff; Pargiter, *MP*, 316, 335, 338.
213. IV. 22.
214. Malalasekera, *DPPN*, II. 241.
215. Arrian *Anab.* VI. 28; *Ind.* II. 26-32; Strabo XV. 2.2. 14; Dio. Sic. XVIII. 105; *Perip.* 2, 20, 27, 33.
216. III. 98-101.
217. II. 102.
218. XXX. 16; Cf. *Taitt. Br.*, III. 4. 12. 1.
219. Sec. LXII.
220. V. 25.9.
221. VII. 2.2.
222. VII. 2.15-16.
223. VII. 18.
224. Whitehead, *VGSI*, 23 ff.
225. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, I. 45 ff.; *PRFLNI*, II. 57.
226. Dalton, *DEB*, 257 ff.
227. *Ibid.*, 147, 149.
228. *Ibid.*, 220.
229. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, I. 242 ff.
230. *Ibid.*, I. 1 ff; cf. *BG*, XV (1), 360; *JASB*, LVII (1)8.
231. Dalton, *DEB*, 130.
232. *NINQ*, III. 23 ff.
233. Dalton, *DEB*, 220.
234. *IGI*, XVIII. 38 f; XXI. 203 f; Risely, *TCB*, II. 101 ff.
235. Dalton, *DEB*, 231.
236. Risley, *TCB*, I. 386; Crooke, *TCNWPO*, II. 111 ff.
237. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, III. 413 ff.
238. Risley, *TCB*, II. 45 ff.; Dalton, *DEB*, 138 ff; 263 ff.

239. Lyall, *AS*, I. 39 ff; Risley, *TCB*, I. 41-42.
240. Russell, *TCCPI*, IV. 506 ff.
241. *Ibid.*, 485 ff.
242. *Ibid.*, 472 ff.
243. *BG*, XII, 118 ff. XVII. 172 ff.
244. Russell, *CPES*, 90 ff.
245. Grant, *GCP*, 181, 372.
246. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, II. 178 ff.
247. Russell *TCCPI*, III. 161.
248. *Ibid.*, 324, 428, 534; III. 89. 328, 391, 440.
249. Malcolm, *MCI*, II. 181; Hendley in *JRASB*, XLIV, 347 ff.
250. Tod, *AAR*, I. 435, 544, 553.
251. Forbes, *RM*, 78 ff.
252. Tod, *AAR*, I. 80 f.; II. 661, III. 1381.
253. *BG*, XI. 383; Cunningham, *ASR*, XIII, 147.
254. *BG*, V. 212.
255. *BG*, VII. 409 ff.
256. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, II. 439 ff.
257. *Ibid.*
258. Ibbetson, *PE*, 311.
259. Crooke, *PRFLNI*, I. 211 ff.
260. Ibid., II. 57.
261. Dalton, *DEB*, 21 ff.; Gait, *CR*, 1891, I. 21 ff.
262. Grierson, *LSI*, II. 59 ff; Hodgson in *JASB*, XIX, 309 ff.
263. Dalton, *DEB*, 50.
264. Intro. to Gurdon's K. XXIII.
265. Playfair, *G*. 80 ff.
266. Das J.K. *TO*, 5-6, 16, 22, 28-29, 35-36.
267. *Ibid.*, 42-43, 49, 55, 63, 85, 91, 102, 109, 116, 138, 145.

Mother Goddesses in Literary and Mythological Records

PROLOGUE

As we have seen, archaeological excavations and explorations have revealed the incipient stages of the Mother Goddess cult by bringing into light numerous nameless figurines from different parts of the world. These figurines were first fashioned as fertility charms giving excessive prominence to the sexual features. They really represent the embryonic stage preceding those of the Earth Mother and many of her various counterparts. The attributes and functions of these primitive deities were later specialized by different goddesses whose names, conceptions, legends and activities we come across in the mythological and religious literature and also in the epigraphs belonging to different periods. Facts about the Western Asian Mother Goddesses have been derived mainly from the writings on clay tablets. The well-known Babylonian clay tablets should be referred to in this connection. The Ugaritic texts are also inscribed on clay tablets in an archaic Canaanite dialect akin to the ancient Hebrew and Phoenician, which throw a flood of light on the Mother Goddess cult. Inscriptional studies practically laid the basis of the researches on the Western and Central European Mother Goddesses.[1] The literary records of the Egyptians like the Pyramid texts and also the Graeco-Roman writings reveal the unique position enjoyed by the Mother Goddesses in different parts of the ancient world. In the case of India, we have an

abundance of literary records bearing on the cult of the Mother Goddess. Inscriptional documents are also by no means insignificant.

GODDESSES OF EGYPT AND WESTERN ASIA

The cult of Osiris and his sister-spouse Isis probably originated at Busiris in the Eastern Delta of the Nile, and it was later incorporated within the framework of the Heliopolitan solar mythology, according to which, the sun-god Atum-Re produced Shu, the god of atmosphere, and Tefnut, the goddess of moisture, from whom were born Geb, the earth-god, and Nut, the sky-goddess, the parents of Osiris and Isis and of Set and Nephthys. Originally, these were local deities of different regions of Egypt, and this genealogy was evidently invented for the purpose of union among different tribes. Eventually the goddess Nut became more prominent as the 'lady of the heaven', 'mistress of the two lands' and 'the guardian of the dead.'[22] Nut was usually represented with cow's horns, and often in the form of a great cow with stars on her body indicating her children. At Abydas, there were sculptural representations of this goddess on the roof of a chamber behind the temple of Seti I of the 19th dynasty. At Denderah, she was identified with Hathor, the Mother Goddess of a different tradition. Worshipped in the form of a cow, this Hathor was the mother and wife of Horus and she absorbed the attributes of many goddesses which made her mythology seriously complicated. Later, she became identified with Isis who adopted her iconographic symbols like the horns of consecration, double axe, round disc, etc.[3] Another ancient goddess of the Western Delta was Neith of Sais who later came to be identified with Hathor and Isis and to become the wife of Osiris and the mother of Horus.[4] Her original iconographical symbols were a shield and a bunch of arrows. Besides these deities, we are informed of a few Semitic goddesses that had come to Egypt. We may refer, in this connection, to Anat who was a form of Astarte or Ashtaroth, a goddess of war and vegetation, the counterpart of the Syrian Asherah. In the New kingdom in Egypt, especially at

Memphis, she became the composite deity Anat and came to be regarded as the daughter of Ptah or of Re

The most popular and important Mother Goddess of Egypt was Isis. Originally she was a pre-dynastic goddess of the twelfth nome of Lower Egypt where she was first incorporated in the Osiris tradition that came from Busiris. In her various capacities, she was identified with almost every goddess in Egypt. We have seen that the legends of her search for the mortal remains of her murdered husband Osiris at Byblos were identical with those of Demeter for her daughter Persephone at Eleusis. Isis is generally depicted with a vulture head-dress, the horns of Hathor and the solar disc, often with double crowns of upper and lower Egypt or with her son Horus on her lap. In later examples, she is crowned either with the crescent moon or with a lotus in her hand. Sometimes her head is covered with a long veil. It appears that in association with the Memphite cult of Serapis at Alexandria, the cult of Isis spread rapidly in the Hellenistic regions. Plutarch says that Ptolemy Soter employed Manetho and Timotheus to formulate a syncretistic Hellenized Isis cult in association with Serapis, who was identified with Osiris so that the Egyptians and the Greeks of Alexandria could unite in a common worship. Her temples were erected at Athens, Halicarnassus and Antioch and her cult became popular also in Cyprus as well as in Syria and Asia Minor. From the Eastern Mediterranean she made her way to Rome through Sicily in the third century B.C. Her cult was fully established in Rome about A.D. 215 when Aurelius Caracalla gave her a place in the Roman pantheon with a great temple on the Capitoline hill.

From the Ugaritic texts, especially from the epic of Baal Anat, we come to know that different forms of the goddess Ishtar were worshipped in Palestine and its adjoining regions under such names as Anat, Asherah, Astarte, Ashtaroth, etc. The goddess Anat, also called 'The Lady of the Mountains'[5] was the sister and consort of Baal who was the counterpart of Tammuz as the fertility god of vegetation. The Baal-Anat mythical cycle was represented by harvest festivals in which sex-charged rituals predominated. We have already referred to this myth in which Anat was the vitalizing power of nature,

Baal the male god of fertility and Mot the 'dead' seed-corn buried beneath the ground to rise again. An older mythical cycle is represented in the Ugaritic texts by the goddess Asherah, 'the Creatress of the Gods' and 'Lady of the Sea', and her father consort El. In the Baal-Anat mythical cycle, Asherah is described as a rival of Anat who tried to get one of her sons (Attar) appointed to the vacant throne of Baal.[6] Later on, however, a connection developed between Asherah and Baal. It appears that the two goddesses—Asherah and Anat—were rival aspirants to supreme status. The cults of Asherah and Anat were popular in Syria, and also in Egypt in a later period. In the fifth century Aramaic Elphantine Papyri Anat is mixed up with Yahu as the consort of Yahweh.[7] In Israel, Asherah under the name Ashtaroth was coupled with Baal.[8] That she was also the chief goddess of Tyre is indicated by the texts which refer to her great shrine and royal worshippers in that region. The conflict between Yahwism and these primitive cults is described in the books of the Old Testament.

Of the Syrian goddesses, Atargatis later became popular and her cult was introduced in different parts of the Roman empire. She was a goddess of vegetation and fertility like Ishtar or Astarte. Her consort was Hadad. Historically, however, Atargatis and Astarte were distinct, although later authorities had tried to establish their identity. Her temple at Hierapolis and particulars of her cult have been described by Lucian. Her temple was the largest and richest in Syria. Only the priests had access to the inner shrine of her temple. Her worship was characterised by phallic symbols, eunuch priests and temple prostitution. The similarity of her rituals with those of Attis and Cybele led Lucian to connect her with the former goddess.[9] Her Hierapolitan cult symbols like bull, lion, double-axe, etc., are suggestive of Anatolian influence. In the inscriptions from Delos, belonging to the beginning of the first century, she is identified with Aphrodite.[10] At Rome, she came to be known as Dea Syria or Diasuria or Iasura. Her cult centre appears to be Hierapolis whence 'her cult was diffused in the wake of the worship of Astarte, and so penetrated westwards until at length it reached the Greek islands the Mediterranean littoral and the Graeco-Roman world in the Hellenistic period'.[11] The description of this goddess, as we find

in the writings of Lucian and Apuleius, is confirmed by numismatic evidence. On the local coins she is portrayed as seated on a lion, or on a throne supported by a lion, while her male partner Hadad occurs in his bull symbol on the reverse.[12] Astarte figurines from the Palestinean site of Gezer are marked by horned head-dress.[13] Numerous Astarte plaques and fragmentary figurines in clay and stone are found from Tell Beit Mirsim, Schechem, Megidao and Gerar. These belong to the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age.[14] The goddess is also shown with horned head-dress on a stele found at Beth Shan.[15]

GODDESSES OF GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

Of the Greek goddesses with distinct pre-Hellenic Cretan background, the first reference should be made to Rhea, 'the mother of the gods' whose Phrygian counterpart was Cybele. But this Hellenic Rhea, who was given a rank of diminishing importance in the Olympian group of deities as the wife of Kronos, was not a self-created being, but the daughter of Gaea, the Earth Mother, and Uranus, the sky Father, who may be equated with the Indian Dyaus and Pṛthivī. Her son was Zeus who was also evidently of Cretan origin. We have already referred to the fact that this Cretan Zeus represented the process of fecundity on earth, being the son and consort of Rhea, and the Greek sky-god of the same name was a syncretistic product. There is evidence to show that Zeus has a dual character. In the Minoan-Mycenaean cults, he was the male god of vegetation and fertility subordinate to the Mother Goddess while in his purely Hellenized form he was the Sky Father and the head of a patriarchal pantheon. The legends of his union with the Earth and Corn goddesses like Hera, Dione, Demeter, Semele, Persephone, etc., are indicative of his pre-Hellenic characteristics. According to the Greek mythology, his consort is Hera who seems originally to have been mainly concerned with birth, marriage, menstrual cycle and maternity.[16] The secret rites connected with her cult reveal her origin in hoary antiquity. The goddess Athena was also of Cretan origin. Nilsson has shown that she was a survival of the Minoan-Mycenaean household goddess bearing a shield, the protectress of cities.

Eventually she acquired a military character but she never abandoned her earlier female attributes and functions.[17] In Greek mythology, she is depicted as the guardian of artists and craftsmen and also as the personification of wisdom. Her title Pallas is indicative of sexual rites connected with the primitive form of her worship.

According to the *Theogony*[18] of Hesiod, Kronos, the youngest Titan who was the brother and husband of Rhea, cut off the generative organ of his father and threw it into the sea. It was full of sperm from which the charming goddess Aphrodite was born. The story reminds us of the emasculation of Attis. Also, according to an Indian Puranic legend, the god Śiva on one occasion cut off his own generative organ. However, Aphrodite was not originally a Greek Goddess. She was Western Asiatic, akin to Ishtar or Astarte.[19] Her cult reached Greece through the Phoenicians from the great Semitic family of peoples. That she was originally a goddess of vegetation is proved by her association with Adonis. The latter was no other than the Babylonian Tammuz, one of whose Semitic appellations was *Adonai*, which meant 'My Lord', and this Semitic epithet was the source of the Greek name Adonis. The goddess loved this young Adonis, but he would die every year, and the goddess, and with her the whole world, would go into mourning over this tragedy. According to another version, Aphrodite hid Adonis as an infant in a chest which she entrusted to Persephone, but the latter did not return him to her, even though she herself went to the nether region to reclaim him. At last Zeus decreed that Adonis should spend a part of the year on earth with Aphrodite and the rest with Persephone in the underworld. This legend is a combination of the myth of Ishtar's visit to the lower world for restoring Tammuz to life and that of Demeter who went in search of Persephone who was abducted by Pluto. The festival of Aphrodite and Adonis, symbolizing the death and resurrection theme, was celebrated annually at Byblus on the coast of Syria. In Rome, Aphrodite was transformed into Venus whose original sanctuary was on Mount Eryx.[20] As early as the Second Punic War, her temple was erected on the Capitol[21] where she was worshipped as the guardian of marriage and agriculture and also as the goddess of the *meretrices*, i.e., the

harlots. Her cult was popularized by the poet Virgil and also by heroes like Sulla, Pompey and Caesar.[22] Finally Augustus made her the Magna Mater of Rome.

The goddess Artemis was a combination of two deities. A pre-Hellenic virgin goddess of Minoan origin[23] who was an Earth Mother and Mistress of the Beasts, she became the sister of Apollo in Greek mythology. She also absorbed another deity of Western Iranian origin, where she bore the name Anakitis and was honoured by the temple prostitution of numerous hieroduli.[24] The ecstatic dances so prominent in her worship connect her with Phrygia and Cybele, as do the lions with which so often she is flanked.[25] The Artemis of Ephesus was thought of not as a maiden, but as a nurse and the all-nourishing mother, as is indicated by the numerous breasts of her cult images. The Hellenic Artemis was the Lady of the wood, always thought as hunting or otherwise in rapid movement, lightly clad, with dress tucked up high, sometimes on horseback or in a chariot drawn by deer. She was the protector of the young of all creatures, tender to cubs of lions, pregnant hares and all suckling and roving beasts.[26] In her Roman form of Diana, she became the combination of all these characteristics.

Demeter and her daughter were typical Earth and Corn Mothers. We have already referred to the conception, attributes and functions of these two goddesses, their myths and rituals, and also their connections with the agricultural cults of different countries.

In the Hittite city-states of the north-east of the Anatolian plateau, and in the adjoining regions of Asia Minor, the Mother Goddess was worshipped under different local names. At Commana in Pontus she was known as Ma, a name which may have been as old as that of the Sumerian Mama or Mamitu. In Armenia she was Anaitis; in Cilecia she was Ati, while in Phrygia she was best known as Cybele, mother and wife of Attis, who linked with Ishtar as mother and wife of Tammuz, Aphrodite as mother and wife of Adonis, and Isis as mother, sister and wife of Osiris. In Phoenicia, the Great Mother was called Astarte who was a form of Ishtar and identical with the Biblical Ashtaroth.

The popularity of the cult of the Mother Goddess in the

land of the Hittites is proved by the Yazilikaya reliefs, in a rock sanctuary about two miles from the village of Boghaz Köi, showing two converging processions of gods and goddesses, from which Hepit, the chief goddess of the Hurrian pantheon, can be identified with the help of an inscription. The goddess is represented as standing on a panther and dressed in a full-sleeved robe, pleated skirt and a tiara on the head. Behind her in the procession is a smaller figure of a beardless youth who has been identified on the basis of his emblems with Sharma or Sharruma, the son and consort of the goddess. There are two other goddesses in the procession probably representing Mazzulla, the daughter of the sun-goddess of Arinna, and Zintulu, her grand daughter. The storm-and-weather god Teshub, who was destined to play a great role as the subsequent consort of the goddess, is also seen in the procession leading the males. From the Hittite texts it is supposed that the original cult was concerned with the goddess Hepit on Hebat and her consort Sharma. Later on the sun-goddess of Arinna came to the forefront, and when the land of the Hittites came under Hurrian influence, the goddess Hepit was identified with her and became the consort of the storm-and-weather god Teshub. In this process Shaushka, the Hurrian goddess of love, sensuality and wårfare, the sister of Teshub, was identified with the great Babylonian goddess Ishtar, and worshipped in south-east Anatolia and Samuha and elsewhere in the Hurrian region.[27]

At Commana in the Taurus area, where some of the oldest Hittite sanctuaries were situated, the goddess Hepit eventually came to be known as Ma. She became possessed of the essential attributes of the sun-goddess of Arinna, and like Ishtar and Anat she developed martial characteristics. That is why she was identified by the Romans with Ma-Bellona, the goddess of war. In the Hittite texts, however, we do not find anything suggestive of the transformation of the fertility goddess into a war goddess. Her rituals included wild orgies in which her votaries castrated themselves in dedication to her service. Her cult was probably introduced in Rome by the soldiers who had come in contact with it during the campaigns of Sulla and Pompey in Asia Minor. The first temple of Ma-Bellona was vowed by Appius Claudius in 296 B.C. and erected

somewhat later in the Campus Martius near the altar of Mars.[28] It is interesting to note that the name of the Indian goddess Umā recalls Ma (in India *mātā*, *mā*, *māi*, *ambā*, *amma*, etc., mean 'mother'). Likewise, the name of Durgā corresponds with that of Tarqqas, a deity mentioned in the Lycian inscriptions of Asia Minor. The ancient cults which inspired those of Ma or Kubélé (Cybele) and Attis, or Hepit and Teshub, the former having as her vehicle the lion and the later bull, might have something to do with the Indian cults of Śiva and Umā.[29]

We have already had occasion to refer to the cult of Cybele, the Magna Mater of Asia Minor, known as Mater Idaea. It is possible that Crete was the original home of the Phrygian mysteries of Cybele whose pre-Hellenic and Hellenic counterpart was Rhea.[30] In her Phrygian home, she was primarily the goddess of fertility which is proved by numerous agricultural myths associated with her. She seems to have absorbed a number of goddesses, of whom the most important was Agdistis who was connected with her myths. The lover of Cybele was Attis, son of the virgin mother Nana,[31] who died of bleeding caused by his emasculation under a pine tree. His corpse was consecrated at Pessinus, where rites were instituted and performed annually in his honour. The rites, reminiscent of the Dionysian orgies, were marked by physical mutilations, barbaric music, frantic dances, open sexuality and fantastic cruelty. Her rites had much to do with the *galli* of the Syrian goddess Astarte in which emasculation was a popular feature. The Hellenization of her cult began to take place from the fifth century B.C. Although the orgiastic elements, the cruel acts of sexual mutilation, the ecstatic emotional rites connected with her worship were disapproved of by a section of the Greeks, they became increasingly popular among the masses. The story of the introduction of her cult in Rome is interesting. A prophecy foretold the Romans that the Carthegian invader Hannibal would be driven from Italy if the Idaean mother were brought from Pessinus to Rome.[32] Livy[33] says that Publius Scipio went with all the married women to bring the goddess. She was carried by the women and when the ship arrived at the mouth of the Tiber, the first ladies of the state headed by Claudia Quinta came to receive the goddess. She carried the goddess to Rome where the whole city poured out to meet her. Then

she was carried to the Temple of Victory on the Palatine. It was in the middle of 204 B.C. when the goddess arrived. The goddess went to work at once, because the harvest of that year was such as had not been seen for many days and in the very next year Hannibal left Rome.

GODDESSES OF MESOPOTAMIA AND IRAN

The earliest settlers of the Tigro-Euphrates valley were agriculturists and like other agricultural communities they were worshippers of the Earth Mother, the Creatrix, whose moods were reflected by natural phenomena, whose lovers were the spirits of seasons. From this goddess developed the later conception of the goddess Ishtar who, like the Egyptian Isis, absorbed many other local goddesses.

In Sumerian mythology, the goddess Ninhursaga was the Earth Goddess. She bore the epithets Ninsikilla, meaning 'the pure lady', Nintu and Kalamma, 'the lady who gives birth', 'the mother of the land', Damgal-nunna, 'the great spouse of the prince', etc. Each of these attributes was later personified into distinct goddesses. Her lover was Enki by whom she gave birth to a number of deities.[31] Tiamat was a Babylonian goddess of dual personality representing the watery chaos out of which the earth was fashioned. The story of her combat with Mạrduk is recorded in the inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian kings. The Akitu festival at Babylon was celebrated by a dramatic miming of the primeval cosmic battle between the beneficent powers led by Marduk and the hosts of chaos under Tiamat, the imprisonment of Marduk in a mountain, his subsequent release and reunion with the goddess who was a form of Ishtar.

According to Herodotus, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria was founded by king Ninus and queen Semiramis. This lady was reputed to be the daughter of Derceto, the fish-goddess whom Pliny identified with Atargatis. Semiramis was actually an Assyrian Queen of revered memory who was later deified and took the place of a goddess, apparently Nina, the prototype of Derceto. This Nina, perhaps the form of the Earth Mother Damkina, wife of Ea, was the Great Mother of the Sumerian

city Nina, and she was one of the many Earth Goddesses later absorbed by Ishtar. This goddess was also worshipped at Lagash.[35]

We have already had occasion to refer to the 'death and resurrection theme' of the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz which gave expression to the vegetation cycle. Its older version is found in the myth of Inanna and Dumuzi who were essentially the Sumerian counterparts of Ishtar and Tammuz. Inanna stood in much the same relation to Dumuzi as did Ishtar to Tammuz, the embodiment of creative powers of spring and the personification of the autumnal decline of the seasonal cycle. Dumuzi was regarded as the faithful son of the waters that came forth from the earth and it was his reunion with Inanna that reawakened the earth and made it bring forth abundantly. Annually he died in the normal rotation of the seasons and passed into the land of darkness and death. It was Inanna who resuscitated him and brought about the revival of life in nature by paying a visit to the nether regions. The Sumerian records contain the fragments of the story of Inanna's quest which follow closely the Semitic 'Descent of Ishtar into the Nether Regions' inscribed on Akkadian tablets dating from the first millennium B.C. Her celebrated counterpart Ishtar, whose personality, myths and rituals profoundly influenced the Mother Goddess cults of ancient world, was originally the Earth Goddess, the controller of vegetation and fertility, who rose to prominence by absorbing the qualities of a variety of earth deities like Damkina, Lady of the Earth, who became the consort of Ea, Ninlil, the wife of Enlil, who gave birth to Nanna, Aruru, Nintu, Ninmah, Ninhursaga and so on. From her myths, it is evident that she was the ultimate source of regeneration, the embodiment of all creative power, and that her consort Tammuz was the personification of the decline and revival of vegetation and of all the generative forces of nature.[36]

Akkadian inscriptions refer to such Elamite goddesses as Ninni, Shala, Kiririsha, etc., but the goddess whose cult was eventually extended from Asia Minor to Susa down to the Parthian period was Nanaia who became identified with the Avestan Anahita,[37] the goddess of fertility and water. In a rock-relief at the entrance to the village Saripul, on the ancient

highway from Baghdad to Tehran, the goddess Ninni is depicted with the Lullubi king Annubanimi. On the Luristan votive discs, Kiririsha, the fertility goddess of Susa is represented as holding her breasts and squatting in the posture of childbirth.[38] Anahita absorbed the qualities of the Syrian Anat, the Babylonian Inanna-Ishtar and other goddesses of their types and stood in the same tradition as the Elamite Kiririsha and Nanaia. In Iranian religion, as a member of the triad Ahura Mazda-Mitra-Anahita she appears in the Achaemenian cuneiform inscriptions in association with Mithra. As Kenvagar she was worshipped as the Iranian Artemis. In Elymais, two sanctuaries dedicated to Artemis and Athena were associated with her, very much as at Susa where she was worshipped as Nanaia. At Istakhr there was a fine temple of Anahita belonging to the Sasanian period. Outside Iran, her cult was popular in Lydia, Pontus and Cappadocia, but particularly in Armenia. Ritual prostitution was a significant feature of her cult.[39] In Lydia, she was syncretized with her Greek and Phrygian counterparts. Her cult was popularized by Artaxerxes II who was responsible for erecting her images with prominent breasts, golden crown and embroidered cloak, ear-rings, necklace and girdle, at Susa, Eabatna, Damascus, Babylon, Bactria and elsewhere. In a rock-relief at Naqsh-i-rustam king Naresh is depicted as receiving his insignia from this goddess. In the same way Chosroes (Khasru) II is shown as receiving his royal symbols from Anahita and Ahura Mazda in a relief at Taq-i-Bustan.[40]

GODDESSES IN THE VEDIC LITERATURE OF INDIA

Of the female deities mentioned in the Vedic literature we should begin with Aditi, the mother of the Gods. She appears to be a very ancient deity whose original character and functions were forgotten even as early as the days of the *Ṛgveda*. She is not the subject of any separate hymn, her name occurring in the *Ṛgveda* nearly eighty times. Very rarely mentioned alone,[41] she is constantly mentioned with her sons, the Ādityas. She is described as the mother of Mitra and Varuṇa,[42] of Aryaman[43] and of kings and men.[44] She is *anarvā* or intact,[45] widely expanded,[46] a mistress of wide stalls,[47] bright and luminous, a

supporter of creatures,[48] and a housewife.[49] She is spoken of as protecting from distress and she is said to grant complete welfare and safety, but she is more frequently invoked to release from guilt or sin.[50]

In a note on *Ṛgveda* I. 166. 12, Max Müller says:

> Aditi, an ancient god or goddess, is in reality the earliest name to express the *infinite*; not the *infinite* as a long process of abstract reasoning, but the visible *infinite*, visible by naked eye, the endless expanse, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky.[50a]

Some scholars understand the word Aditi primarily as a noun meaning 'non-binding', 'boundlessness', etc. Roth, for example, understands the word to mean 'inviolability', 'imperishableness' and so on.[50b] .But such epithets have nothing to do with her original conception. Basically she was the mother of the gods. The *Ṛgveda* VII.25.3. says: 'The mother, the great, the holy Aditi, brought forth these twain (Mitra and Varuṇa), the mighty lords of all wealth, that might exercise divine power.' In *RV* VII.47.9. she is invoked thus : 'May Aditi defend us, may Aditi grant us protection, she who is the mother of opulent Mitra, of Aryaman, and of the sinless Varuṇa.' Even Indra is often designated as an Āditya.[51] Among the Ādityas we come across such great gods as Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Dakṣa, etc.[52] Thus, she was originally the mother of the gods but, as one may naturally expect, being a female member of a patriarchal family of the Vedic gods, it was difficult for her to maintain a prominent position in the pantheon. Therefore we do not at all feel surprised when we find this goddess openly flattering Indra.[53] In the later portions of the *Ṛgveda*, the poets even hesitate to declare frankly that Aditi was the mother of the gods. In *RV* X. 72.4. it is stated that the earth sprang from Uttānapad, from the earth sprang the regions: Dakṣa sprang from Aditi, and Aditi from Dakṣa. According to Yāska[54] Aditi and Dakṣa might have originated from the same source, or derived their substance from each other. In other portions of the *Ṛgveda*'[55] Dakṣa is described as one of the Ādityas and consequently as the son of Aditi. But in the Brāhmana literature, Dakṣa is identified with Prajāpati, the Creator.[56] It seems therefore that the Vedic tribes

who developed a pastoral economy and a patriarchal form of social organization, were not willing to give a minimum recognition to this old mother of the gods. In her place they were gradually developing the idea of a male creator which was later finalized in the form of Dakṣa-Prajāpati.

In the later Vedic texts, her position gradually declines. In the *Atharvaveda* she is described as the mother of heroic sons[57] and invoked as the great mother of the devout, the mistress of *ṛta*, strong in might, undecaying, widely extended, protecting, skilfully guiding, etc.[58] Such invocation is also found in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*[59] in which she is said to be the wife of Viṣṇu.[60] The *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*[61] also holds the same. The *Nighaṇṭu* gives Aditi as a synonym of *pṛthivī* (earth), *vāc* (speech), *go* (cow) and *dyāvyāpṛthivī* (heaven and earth). In the *Atharvaveda*,[62] Aditi seems to be identified with the earth, and this identification is frequent in Brāhmaṇa literature. In the *Vāj. Sam.*,[63] Aditi is spoken of as a cow, and in the rituals a ceremonial cow is commonly addressed as Aditi. In the Epic and Puranic mythology, Aditi is the daughter of Dakṣa.

The name of the goddess Diti occurs only three times in the *Ṛgveda*. In *RV*. IV.2.11. she is mentioned in connection of Agni, in V.62.8. in that of Mitra and Varuṇa and in VII.15.12. in that of Agni, Savitṛ and Bhaga. We have no definite idea about her conception and functions. Her name implies that she was probably conceived as a liberal giver. She is mentioned along with Aditi also in the later Saṃhitās.[64] Her sons are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*.[65] The writers of the epico-purānic literature took her name as merely an antithesis to that of Aditi, and connected her with the demons.[66]

The most important goddess of the *Ṛgveda* is Uṣas who is celebrated in 20 hymns and mentioned more than 300 times. She is the dawn-goddess who like a dancer displays her bosom,[67] like a maiden decked by her mother shows her form,[68] unveils her charms appearing in the east,[69] drives away darkness,[70] awakens creatures and makes the birds fly up bestowing life and breath,[71] sets every being to motion,[72] reveals the path of men of five tribes,[73] manifests all beings,[74] drives away evil dreams,[75] dispels darkness,[76] discloses the treasures concealed by darkness and distributes them bountifully,[77] opens the gate of heaven,[78] and renders good service to the gods by causing all worshippers to

awake and the sacrificial fires to be kindled.[79] She is borne on a shining, well-adorned and spontaneously-yoked car,[80] drawn by powerful steeds.[81] She is resplendent, shining, bright, white, ruddy, golden, of brilliant bounty, divine, immortal, beautiful. She is the consort of the sun,[82] sister of the Āditya Bhaga,[83] kinswoman of Varuṇa[84] and daughter of heaven.[85] She is connected with Agni[86] who is often conceived also as her lover,[87] and with the twin gods of the early morning, the Asvins.[88] She is invoked to arouse the gods, to bring them to drink Soma, to help the sacrificial fires to be kindled, to bestow wealth and children, protection and long life, upon her worshippers.[89]

In spite of these numerous references to Uṣas,[90] as we find in the *Ṛgveda*, it is interesting to note that she has become completely insignificant in later Vedic literature. She does not even figure in the subsequent religious history of India, and is practically absent in the Epics and Purāṇas. Even in the *Ṛgveda*, the spirit of honour and respect to her has not always been maintained. She receives no share in the Soma-offering. In *RV* IV. 30.8-11, the poet does not hesitate to admire the heroism of Indra in overcoming Uṣas:

> This, Indra, was a deed of might and manliness which thou didst smite the daughter of the sky (Uṣas), a woman who was bent on evil. Thou Indra, the great (god) didst crush Uṣas, though the daughter of the sky, who was exalting herself. Uṣas fled away in terror from her shattered car, when the vigorous (Indra) had crushed it. This chariot of her lies broken and dissolved, while she herself has fled afar off.[91]

According to D.D. Kosambi,[92] such Indra-Uṣas legends are suggestive of the fact that a section of the Vedic tribes opposed the cult of Uṣas because this cult was probably borrowed from a pre-Vedic religion of the Mother Goddess. The same hymn which describes Indra's rape of Uṣas also describes his success against the non-Vedic chiefs.[93] He plundered the cities of Suṣṇa, defeated the Dāsa Kaulitara, slew five thousand followers of the Dăsa Varcin, made a gift of hundred stone-built cities and killed thirty-thousand Dāsas for the sake of Dhabhīti. The combination of the two episodes in a single hymn was not

accidental and therefore the Indra-Uṣas episode should be taken into account in view of inter-tribal rivalries.

The *Ṛgveda* refers to Uṣas as *mātā devānām aditer anīkam*, 'mother of gods and rival of Aditi' as Sāyaṇa interprets it.[91] But how is she a rival of Aditi? Whose mother was she? Indra's hostile attitude towards Uṣas suggests that she was not originally a goddess of the Vedic peoples. Since the story of the rape of Uṣas by Indra is repeated in many passages of the *Ṛgveda*,[95] it cannot be ignored as an isolated event without any significance. Aditi's rivalry with Uṣas suggests that the latter might have belonged to a different pantheon. The whole event might be a reminiscent of the struggle between two distinct religious ideals. Though not conclusive, Kosambi's hypothesis provides us with a new line of approach. In the Vedic pantheon, the concept of an all-pervading Female Principle is almost absent, goddesses being negligible in number and insignificant in position. The only exception is Uṣas, whom Indra, the hero of the male-dominated Vedic pantheon, is represented as attacking and destroying. Accordingly, in the imagination of the Vedic poets, Indra is represented as destroying the cart of Uṣas, and the frightened goddess flees towards the Vipās.

We have already had occasion to refer to the Earth Goddess Pṛthivī who is generally invoked conjointly with Dyaus, the sky-god. Individually she is lauded in one short hymn of the *Ṛgveda*[96] and in a long one in the *Atharvaveda*.[97] In the *Ṛgveda*, heaven and earth are described as universal parents,[98] but in many passages, heaven is separately styled father and the earth mother.[99] In some passages both heaven and earth are said to have been generated by other gods. Pṛthivī is spoken of as 'kindly Mother Earth' to whom a dead man is supposed to go.[100] The *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*[101] and *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*[102] derive the name of Pṛthivī from the root *prath*, meaning to extend. The attributes by which she is characterized are great (*mahī*), firm (*dṛḍha*) and shining (*arjunī*). She is conceived as bearing the burden of the mountains, supporting the trees of the forest and fertilizing the soil.[103]

Reference has already been made to the Corn Mother Sītā and also to the rivers like Sarasvatī, invoked as a form of goddess. About twenty-one rivers are mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, but it was the Sarasvatī that was the first to be singled out as a

goddess of reputation associated with Indra, Puṣan, the Maruts, the Aśvins and a host of divinities.[104] In the Brāhmaṇa literature,[105] the river-goddess Sarasvatī has been identified with Vāc, Speech, and in post-Vedic mythology she has become the goddess of eloquence and wisdom, invoked as a muse and regarded as the wife of Brahmā. The transition from the older to the later conception may be traced to the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*[106] in which it is stated that when the gods celebrated a healing sacrifice, the Aśvins as physicians and Sarasvatī through speech (*vāca*) communicated vigour to Indra. Sarasvatī is also associated with the sacrificial goddess Iḍā and Bhāratī with whom she forms a triad. Besides the rivers, the Waters themselves, Āpaḥ, are lauded in four hymns of the *Ṛgveda*[107] as well as in a few scattered passages as goddesses. As Mothers they produce Agni,[108] one of whose forms is called 'Son of Waters'. The aspect of maternity of the Waters is stressed in a number of verses.[109]

Goddesses occupy a subordinate position in Vedic religion. As wives of the great gods they play a still more insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods with but little independent power. Hardly anything about them is mentioned but their names, which are simply formed from those of the gods with the feminine suffix *ānī*. Thus Indrāṇī is simply the 'wife of Indra' mentioned in some stray passages of the *Ṛgveda*.[110] Prāsahā, a wife of Indra, is mentioned in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.[111] Agnāyī, Varuṇanī, Aśvinī and Rodasī, the wives respectively of Agni, Varuṇa, Aśvins and Rudra, are also mentioned without any individuality.[112] The exception is Uṣas, but we have seen that a process of character assassination of this goddess is already set in motion in the *Ṛgveda*. Unlike nearly all the gods, she receives no share in the Soma-offering. Sarasvatī ranks with the lowest class of deities, and this holds good also in the case of Pṛthivī.

Of other goddesses mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, reference may be made to Rātri, the personification of night, who is invoked only in one hymn.[113] Vāc, personified speech, is celebrated in one hymn in which she describes herself.[114] This hymn is probably a later interpolation in which a rudimentary conception of an all-prevading female principle is found. She is said to accompany all the gods and support Mitra-Varuṇa, Indra-Agni

and the Aśvins. In another passage she is called the queen of gods.[115] Puraṃdhi, whose name occurs about nine times in the *Ṛgveda*, is the goddess of plenty. Of other goddesses of abundance, we have Pārendi, who is probably identical with the former, and Dhīṣaṇā, mentioned nearly a dozen of times in the *Ṛgveda*. Ilā(Iḍā) the personification of nourishment, generally appear in the *āprī* hymns in which she forms a triad with Sarasvatī and Mahī or Bhāratī. The name of the goddess Bṛhaddivā occurs four times in the hymns to the Viśvadevas. She is called a mother[116] and is mentioned with Ilā,[117] Sarasvatī and Rākā.[118] Rākā is mentioned only twice in the *Ṛgveda*[119] as a goddess of abundance. Sinīvālī is referred to in two hymns.[120] She is a sister of the gods and is implored to grant offspring. She is invoked with Sarasvatī, Rākā as well as Guṅgu (Kuhū). The latter is mentioned in name only.[121] Of other Ṛgvedic goddesses, mention should be made of Pṛṣni,[122] the mother of the Maruts, Saraṇyu,[123] the daughter of Tvaṣṭṛ, Sūryā,[124] the sun-maiden, Araṇyānī,[125] the forest mother, Lakṣmī and Śrī,[126] Śraddhā,[127] an abstract deity symbolising respectfulness, Oṣadhi,[128] the herbal mother, Āpyā, Yoṣā,[129] Sarmā,[130] the dog-mother Gandharvī,[131] Alaksmī,[132] antithesis of Laksmī, Asunīti[133] and Niṣṭigṛ[134] symbolising abstract conceptions.

Ṛgvedic goddesses like Aditi or Uṣas have no significance in the subsequent religious history of India. We do not find in the early stratum of the Vedic literature the names of such Puranic goddesses as Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā, Umā and others. It is only in the later Vedic literature that we find stray mention of these deities. As there is no reference to these goddesses in the *Ṛgveda* we may presume that they were originally non-Vedic deities later adopted by the Vedic tribes. The different names of the Mother Goddess appear to have originally indicated different tribal deities, who were afterwards identified with the wife of Śiva-Paśupati. Some of the Ṛgvedic goddesses, however, survive in later Vedic literature with lesser or greater importance than they receive in the earlier tradition. The wives of the gods (*devānāṃ patnīḥ*) occasionally mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* have in the Brāhmaṇa literature an established place assigned to them in the cult apart from the gods.[135] Rākā and Sinīvālī are in later Vedic texts connected with phases of the moon, the former being the presiding deity of the full-moon and the latter of the

new-moon. In the *Atharvaveda*,[136] Sinīvālī is the wife of Viṣṇu. The Ṛgvedic Ilā is the daughter of Manu in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[137] as well as of Mitra-Varuṇa.[138] In the *Nighaṇṭu*,[139] Vāc is enumerated among the deities of the atmosphere.[140] A legend about Vāc which is frequently referred to in the *Ṛgveda* is that Soma was bought back from the Gandharvas at the price of Vāc and as such he was transformed into a woman.[141] As a more concrete figure Vāc occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[142] in which she is mentioned as a goddess of learning.[143] In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,[144] she is described as the wife of Indra. The *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā*[145] identifies her with Sarasvatī, The *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*[146] makes her the consort of Prajāpati.

Ambikā appears first as Rudra's sister in the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*[147] and in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,[148] but in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[149] she is described as his spouse. The goddess is invoked in the last-mentioned work as Durgī, Vairocanī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī.[150] Umā Haimavatī has been mentioned in the *Kena Upaniṣad*[151] as the personified *brahmavidyā*, i.e., knowledge of Brahman, imparted to Indra, Agni ahd Vāyu. Kāli and Karālī are mentioned in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*[152] as two of the seven tongues of Agni, the others being Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sudhūmravarṇā, Sphuliṅginī and Viśvaruci. Bhadrakālī is mentioned in the *Śāṅkhyāyana Gṛhyaṣūtra* in connection with the Vaiśvadeva rite which a householder was required to perform daily.[153]

GODDESSES IN THE EPICS

The goddesses of the later Vedic literature, become more prominent in the two great epics of India while those of early Vedic pantheon recede into the background.[154] Aditi is still in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* as the mother of the Ādityas.[155] She is the mother of the gods[156] and, as such, heads the list of goddesses like Hrī, Śrī, etc. The *Rāmāyaṇa* regards Dhātṛ as her special son,[157] makes her womb a refuge for Rāvaṇa[158] and the mother of the Vasus and Rudras.[159] In the *Harivaṁśa*,[160] she is identified with Durgā and also with the Earth. There it is said that the same goddess is Aditi to the gods, Sītā to the ploughmen and Earth to the Bhūtas. In both the epics. she is

the wife of the sage Kaśyapa and the *Harivaṃśa* goes on so far as to identify her with Devakī, the mother of Kṛṣṇa. Naraka, the Asura king of Prāgjyotiṣa, is said to have kept her ear-rings stolen by the Nāgas which were recovered by Viṣṇu.[161] It is also said in *Mahābhārata* that after a thousand years of parturition she bore Viṣṇu as dwarf to overthrow Vali, usurper of Indra's power.[162] She is jealous of her Vedic antithesis Diti, who is also a wife of Kaśyapa and mother of the demons. Earth, often addressed as the great Mother, Mahī, Pṛthivī, is imagined as a divine cow giving milk to her children, as daughter of Pṛthu Vainya and as Virāj.[163] As nurse of all, Earth is the helper. Being herself wealthy she provides wealth and rejoices to give corn to generous men.[164] She is the divine bountiful producer of corn, whose ear-rings are the mountains.[165] She deserts the sinful and treacherous.[166] Being overburdened, she sinks down and is subsequently raised up by Viṣṇu who does so assuming the form of a boar. Unable to bear the pressure of population, she complaints to Brahman who creates Death to relieve her of her burden.[167] When Sītā is carried away by the goddess Earth, called Mādhavī Devī and Dharaṇī Devī, she calls upon earth three times to hide her, and the Divine Earth rises on a seat supported by Nāgas and bears Sītā down to the depths. In the epics, earth is conspicuously associated with Viṣṇu from whom is derived her epithet Vaiṣṇavī. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* and also in the *Harivaṃśa*, the earlier Vedic conceptions of Aditi as the ancient mother of the gods and of Pṛthivī as the giver of all good are maintained from the viewpoint of tradition, but so far as their associations and functional aspects are concerned, they are treated as minor divinities of negligible importance. But the celebrated Ṛgvedic goddess Uṣā is even deprived of this minimum recognition. In the southern recension of the *Mahābhārata*[168] she is described as the lover of Sūrya which reflects a tinge of her Vedic conception. But elsewhere she is merely a human being, daughter of Bāṇa and lover of Aniruddha.

Later Vedic goddesses, however, have received greater importance in the epics. Most in them are brought in relation to Viṣṇu and Śiva. Of the Vaiṣṇavite goddesses, Śrī and Lakṣmī play a significant part in the subsequent religious history of India. The goddess Śrī is said to have risen from the ocean.

She is the personification of fortune which was lost by the demons. In a passage of the *Mahābhārata*,[169] she tells Indra that she lived with the demons because they were virtuous, but she deserted them when they became immoral. She is the bestower of material prosperity and as such associated with Kubera. In many passages she is identified with Lakṣmī, which is an historical reality, though in some places both are treated as different goddesses. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*[170] also, Śrī or Lakṣmī, who rose from the ocean clothed in white and for whom the gods and the demons contended, is the wife of Viṣṇu. She is fortune in the form of happiness and wealth. The *Mahābhārata*[171] identifies her with Kṛṣṇa's wife Rukmini, mother of Pradyumna. She is the sister of Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ and mother of the sky-steeds.[172] She is also the wife of Dharma, but it is the epic trait to make her exclusively Viṣṇu's wife. She is also connected with Indra and Kubera. Her epithets such as *padmālaya*, *padmahasta*, etc., indicate her bearing on the lotus, which is her permanent iconographical symbol. Lakṣmī is also a name of Devasenā, the wife of Skanda. Her antithesis Alaksmī, the presiding goddess of all evil, also occurs in the *Mahābhārata*[173] in connection with Kali. Other abstract goddesses like Kīrti, Dhṛti, Medhā, Puṣṭi, Śraddhā, Kriyā, Buddhi, Lajjā, Mati, etc., are mentioned along with Śrī or Lakṣmī in many passages of the two epics. Sometimes they are regarded as daughters of Dakṣa and wives of Dharma.

Of other later Vedic goddesses without distinct sectarian affiliations, mentioned in the two great epics, we may begin with Vāc, identified with Sarasvatī, the supposed consort of Brahmā. This relation did not of course develop in the *Mahābhārata*, in which Earth, Jarā and Sarasvatī are yet regarded as the daughters of Brahmā.[174] As the goddess of fluency and eloquence, to whom also the act of hearing is attributed,[175] the cult of Sarasvatī is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.[176] She is described as appearing before Indra in his court in the form of fluency personified.[177] Elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*[178] she is described as the wife of Manu. Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as daughter of the sun and wife of Brahmā.[179] She is often described as the Mother of the Vedas[180] and identified with Umā or Durgā. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*[181] she belongs to a list of eighteen deities to whom daily sacrifices are to be offered.

Three minor Vedic goddesses, Rākā, Sinīvālī and Kuhū are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*[182] as moon-phases. Sinīvalī and Kuhū (new moon) make a pair as opposed to Anumati and Rākā (full moon). Of other Vedic goddesses mentioned in the epics, reference should be made to Indrāṇī, also known as Śacī or Paulomī, wife of Indra, Rudrāṇī, wife of Rudra, Devī, wife of Varuṇa, and Niṛṛiti, mother of death. Indrāṇī is mentioned many times in the epics. 'Like Indra with Paulomī (Indrāṇī)' is a stereotyped phrase in the *Mahābhārata.*[183] Nahuṣa's attempt to seduce her is a well-known story.[184] Rudrāṇī occurs as the wife of Rudra, who is destined to play a greater role as we shall see later. Devī is mentioned as Śukra's daughter and Varuṇa's wife.[185] She is the mother of Bala and Sūra. Later on her name becomes an epithet of the personified female principle herself. Niṛṛiti is the mother of death who keeps watch and ward over sinners.[186] She is exempt from life and so, as destruction, synonymous with hell. Her conception evidently have some bearing on Kalārātri and Kālī. The former goddess appears with noose in hand and also as an old woman, a black and bloody housewife, scantily clothed.[187]

We have already had the occasion to refer to the Vedic Corn Mother Sītā who has become completely humanized as the heroine of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but her real character has not totally sunk into oblivion. The *Rāmāyaṇa*[188] expressly states that she rose in the field where the ploughshare broke it, rending the earth. She herself is called *dhānyamālinī*, 'corn-crowned', and appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa*[189] as endeavouring to divert her lord from his attention to the furrow (*Sītā*). These are but faint traces of her original vegetal character. In the Vedas she was the wife of Savitṛ or of Indra.[190] She is occasionally recognized in her human role in the *Mahābhārata* apart from the formal *Rāmakathā*. The *Harivaṁśa* mentions *Sītāyajña* or sacrifice in honour of Sītā offered exclusively by the ploughmen. In the later portions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*[191] Rāma is identified with Viṣṇu and Sītā with Lakṣmī. Elsewhere, the former is likened to Bhava as the latter to Giriputrī or Umā.[192] Of other goddesses having no distinct sectarian character, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, reference may be made to Ariṣṭā, mother of the Gandharvas,[193] Bhadrā, daughter of Soma who was stolen by Varuna [194] and another of the same name who was the consort

of Kubera,[195] Girikā, wife of Vasu,[196] Jyotsnā, daughter of Soma who married Varuṇa's son Puṣkara,[197] Rati, wife of Kāma,[198] Svāhā, wife of Agni,[199] etc. Goddesses like Ambikā, Aparṇā, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Gaurī, Kālī, Kauśikī, Śākambharī, Umā, etc., were of Śaivite affiliation, but later they had all been identified with the supreme goddess of the Śāktas, as we shall presently see.

Now about the primitive Mother Goddesses who found their way into different religious systems as Mātṛkās or Divine Mothers. A host of Divine Mothers (Saura Mātṛs) are connected with the sun.[200] This holds good also in the case of Kubera. A genealogical list found in the *Mahābhārata* I.65 dealing with the facts of creation may here be of some interest. It starts with the six mental sons of Brahman. The first of them was Mārīcī whose son was Kaśyapa who was the father of all creatures by the daughters of Dakṣa, thirteen in number, who were mothers of all created beings. Of them, Aditi was the mother of the Ādityas, Diti, Danu, Krodhā, Kalā and Danāyu of the demons and Asuras, Siṁhikā of Rāhu, etc., Prādhā of female spirits and Gandharvas, Vinatā of Garuḍa, etc., Kadru of serpents, Kapilā of cows, and so on. In another place in the *Mahābhārata*[201] the daughters of Dakṣa were fifty in number of whom twenty-seven married Soma and ten married Dharma, Vasus and Rudras. All gods, Sādhyas and Maruts were born of the ten daughters who married Dharma.[202] It is also said that Dakṣa came from Brahman's right toe and his wife Vīriṇī from the left, whom Dakṣa made the mother of fifty daughters. The ten marrying Dharma are Kīrti, Lakṣmī, Dhṛti, Medhā, Puṣṭi, Śraddhā. Kriyā, Buddhi, Lajjā and Mati. A new set of goddesses is mentioned in connection with the genealogy of the animals. The list starts with Tāmrā who had five daughters, Kākī, Śyenī, Bhāsī, Dhṛtarāṣṭrī, Śukī (Crow, Hawk, Vulture, Duck, Parrot), who became mothers of these creatures and their like. Likewise, Krodhavasā had nine daughters who were mothers of deer, bears, elephants, steeds, apes, etc. Surabhi was the mother of Rohiṇī and Gandharvī who were in turns mothers of cows and horses. Analā was the mother of seven *piṇḍaphala* trees, Surasā of cranes and Nāgas and Kadru of the *Pannagas*. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*[203] Dakṣa's eight daughters whom Kaśyapa married were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kālikā, Tāmrā,

Krodhavasā, Manu and Analā, of whom the first four became the mothers of gods, Daityas, Aśvagrīva, Nāraka and Kālakā, while Tāmrā became mother of the birds. Krodhavasā's daughter Śvetā was mother of the elephants while Manu that of men. Siṁhikā is introduced as mother of animals.

But a more well-defined set of Divine Mothers is met with in connection with the birth of Skanda-Kārttikeya. Skanda belongs to Śiva through a doubtful paternity but more through his characteristics. The *Mahābhārata*[204] makes Kumāra (an epithet of Skanda) a son of Agni. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*[205] his name is Kārttikeya because he is mothered by the Kṛttikās, the Pleiades conceived as Divine Mothers. His other epithets are Śākha, Viśākha Naigameya, Guha, Pāvaki, Mahāsena, etc. Whose son he was is debated in the *Mahābhārata* itself: 'Some explain him as son of Pitāmaha, Sanatkumāra, eldest born of Brahman;[206] some say he is son of Agni; some say he is son of Umā; some say he is son of the Kṛttikās; some say he is son of Ganges.'[207] Another tradition makes Skanda the son of Revatī.[208] Skanda's birth from the Kṛttikās is explained in the *Rāmāyaṇa.*[209]

The story of his birth, as narrated at length in the *Mahābhārata,*[210] is as follows. Maheśvara's energy being dissipated fell on Agni which enhanced his power. The latter flung it as seed into the Ganges. She in turn cast it upon Himavat which caused the generation of Skanda. The six Kṛttikās nursed the child who developed six mouths to suck them. Other legends state that Agni as sacrificial fire became passionate to see the wives of the sages and his lover Svāhā having understood his intention satisfied him by assuming their forms. Only she could not assume the form of Arundhatī, the wife of Vaśiṣṭha. The semen extracted from each copulation was discharged by Svāhā on a mountain which was responsible for the conception of Skanda whose parenthood was latter accepted by Śiva and Umā. Skanda was attended by Seven Mothers—Kākī, Halimā, Mālinī, Bṛṃhitā, Āryā, Palālā, and Vaimitrā. According to a *Mahābhārata* legend,[211] after Skanda's birth the gods feared and opposed him, but the Divine Mothers suckled him and gave him all sorts of protection. His wife was Devasenā who was also known by such names as Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinīvālī, Kuhū, Sadvṛtti and Aparājitā. Skanda-

Kārttikeya's relation with Ṣaṣṭhī, the protrectress of children, is significant, revealing something of a primitive substratum of the Mother Goddess cult. The relation is still maintained in many a surviving fertility ritual.

A few of these goddesses, who are mentioned in different places of the two epics, may be regarded as the proto-types of the Devī or the supreme goddess of the Śāktas. This conception is revealed in two hymns, believed to be later interpolation, of the *Mahābhārata*.[212] In these hymns she is addressed as Siddhasenānī (general of the Siddhas), Mandaravāsinī (dweller on the Mandara), Kumārī (maiden), Kālī (black or time as destroyer), Kapālī (wearer of skulls), Bhadrakālī, Mahākalī, Caṇḍī (angry), Caṇḍā (angry), Tāriṇī (deliverer), Karāli (frightful), Vijayā (victory), Jayā, 'younger sister of the chief of cowherds', 'eldest born in the family of the cowherd Nanda', 'delighting always in Mahiṣa's blood', Kauṣikī, Umā, Śākambharī, 'destroyer of Kaiṭabha', Vedaśruti, 'dwelling continually near Jambu, mountain-precipices, and sepulchers' 'the great sleep of embodied beings', 'mother of Skanda', 'divine Durgā', 'dweller in wilderness', Svāhā, Svadhā, Sarasvatī, Sāvitrī, 'mother of the Vedas', Mahādevī, Jambhani, Mohinī, Māyā, Hrī, Śrī, Sandhyā, 'born in the womb of Yaśodā', 'the favourite of Nārāyaṇa', 'who rose to the sky when thrown on a piece of stone', 'holding sword and shield', 'four-armed', 'four-faced', 'consort of Nārāyṇa', 'destroyer of the demon Mahiṣa', 'having perpetual abode in the Vindhyas', 'fond of spirituous liquor, flesh and sacrificial victims', etc.

Umā, also known as Pārvatī, who is the daughter of Himavat and wife of Śiva, is mentioned in many places of the *Rāmāyaṇa*[213] and the *Mahābhārata*[214] with her epithets like Giriputrī, Girirājputrī, Śailarājaputrī', Nagarājaputrī, Girīsā, Nagakanyā, Parvatarājakanyā, etc., all indicating her association with Himalayan region. Śiva is Umādhava, Umāpati, Umāsahāya.[215] The *Harivaṁśa* derives *Umā* from 'don't', as her mother Menā thus addressed her for being austere. Her name recalls Mā or the Mother and her conception goes back to the primitive and universal cult of the Mother Goddess. In the Kirātārjuna episode of the *Mahābhārata*[216] Umā is described as a Kirāta woman. In the Svayamvara-parvādhyāya Draupadī is compared with Umā. Along with her consort she is again

mentioned in the Sabhāparvan as a member of the court of Kubera.[217] She is mentioned in relation to Skanda's birth and Jayadratha's Śiva worship and also as the presiding deity of the northern quarters.[218] In Arjuna's Durgāstotra, Umā occurs as a Mother Goddess and elsewhere she is mentioned along with Aditi, Hrī, Śrī, Svāhā, Sarasvatī and others.[219] In the Dakṣa-Yajña episode and also in a section entitled Śiva-Umā Saṁvāda,[220] Umā is frequently mentioned. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Umā is sometimes called Pārvatī and is mentioned as the younger sister of Gaṅgā, born of Menā and Himalaya.[221] She lengthened the life of Sukeśa, the deserted offspring of the demon Vidyutkeśa, and granted a boon to the demons (Rākṣasas) that their children would attain the age of their mothers immediately after their birth.[222] The legend shows that Umā had a soft corner for the non-Vedic peoples, her original worshippers. More beautiful than Śrī,[223] Umā was not in good terms with the other gods. Once, while she was uniting with Śiva for the purpose of a son, the gods disturbed them and thereupon she cursed the gods that they would never beget children. She also cursed the Earth who absorbed the seed of Śiva that she would be the wife of many and never be happy with her children.[224]

Umā is equated with Durgā in the Durgāstotras (IV. 6; VI. 23) of the *Mahābhārata*. The latter is also called Maheśvarī and Mahānidrā. As demoh-slayer, she is Kaitabhanāśinī and Mahiṣāsṛkpriyā. She is also identified with Bhadrakāḷī, Mahākalī, Kātyāyanī, Kauśikī, Śākambharī and Sāvitri. She lives not only in the Himavat, but all over the land, in deserts and under earth. The Vindhya is also her favourite resort. She is fond of drink and flesh. Her name is Durgā because she saves man from difficulty. She is addressed as Mandaravāsinī, Kumārī, Kālī, Kapālī, Kapilā, Caṇḍī and Caṇḍā. In IV. 6. Durgā is the sister of Kṛṣṇa and wife of Nārāyaṇa and is invoked as if she has nothing to do with Śiva, while in VI. 23 she is identified with Umā. In these lauds she is often described as Bhadrakālī, Pārvatī or Devī. Durgā's identity with Gaurī and Umā took place step by step. At first, Gaurī was the wife of Varuṇa, but later she became the great goddess of the mountain peak, equated with Umā and subsequently with Durgā. In the Āryāstavas of the *Harivaṁśa*,[225] Durgā is invoked by numerous names and epithets. Such names as

Kālarātri, Nidrā, Kātyāyanī, Kauśikī, Virūpā, Virūpākṣī, Viśālākṣī, Mahādevī, Kaumārī, Caṇḍī, Dakṣā, Śivā, Kālī, Bhayadā, Vetālī, Śakunī, Yoginī, Bhutadhātrī, Kusmāṇḍī, etc., later became popular as names of Tantric goddesses. We have already noted that the *Harivaṁśa* refers to her association with the non-Vedic hunting peoples like the Śabaras, etc. The *Harivaṁśa* was composed by the Viṣṇu worshippers but they could not avoid the increasing influence of the popular cult of the female principle. Thus the virgin goddess Kauśikī, the supposed sister of Indra, residing in the Vindhyas and worshipped with animal sacrifice, was taken into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon and conceived as the daughter of Yaśodā and the consort of Nārāyaṇā.

GODDESSES IN JAIN AND BUDDHIST LITERATURE

In the religious history of India, the Mother Goddess never ceased to be an important cult of the people. It was so deep-rooted in the Indian mind that in all the sectarian religions the female principle had to be given a very prominent position. Even the basically atheistic religions like Buddhism and Jainism could not avoid this popular influence.

The Mother Goddess of the simpler peoples easily made her way into Jainism. Jain texts like the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, *Ācāra Dinakara*, etc., show in their classification of Jain goddesses that many of them were adaptations from the existing cults. The cult of the Yakṣiṇīs is an important feature of Jainism. In the Jain texts they are sometimes described as female attendants (*Śāsanadevatās*) of the Tīrthaṁkaras. Sometimes they are conceived as the leaders of the women converts. They are endowed with semi-divine attributes and symbolism of various kinds. In historical analysis, they reveal mixed conceptions and their origin is to be sought in the prehistoric substratum of the Mother Goddess cult. The names and symbols of some of the Śāsanadevatās betray unmistakably original ideas of personalities fused with those of older Vedic and pre-Vedic goddesses. Their names are as follows: Cakreśvarī, Ajitabalā (Rohiṇī), Duritāri (Prajñapti), Kālikā (Vajraśṛṃkhalā), Mahākālī (Puruṣadattā), Śyāmā (Manovegā), Śāntā (Kālī), Bhṛkuti (Jvālāmālinī),

Sutārakā (Mahākālī), Aśokā (Mānavī) Mānavī, (Gaurī), Caṇḍā (Gāndhari), Viditā (Vijayā, Vairotī), Aṅkuśā (Anantamatī), Kandarpā (Paṇṇagādevī, Mānavī), Nirvāṇī (Mahāmānasī), Bālā (Acyutā, Vijayā), Dhāriṇī (Tārā), Dhāraṇapriyā Vairotī (Aparājitā), Naradattā (Bahurūpiṇī), Gāndhārī Camuṇḍā, Ambikā (Kuṣmāṇḍī, Āmrā), Padmāvatī and Siddhāyikā.

Many of the aforesaid goddesses later became well-known as Tantric goddesses in Buddhism and Sāktism. The *Ācāra Dinakara* mentions three classes of Jain goddesses—*prāsāda-devīs* or goddesses of general nature worshipped with installed images, *sampradāya-devīs* or sectarian goddesses and *kula-devis* or Tantric goddesses worshipped with secret *mantras* and esoteric rites. A great many Tantric goddesses have found a room in the Jain pantheon like Kaṅkālī, Kālī, Mahākālī, Cāmuṇḍā, Jvālāmukhī, Kāmākhyā, Kapālinī, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Lalitā, Gaurī, Sumaṅgalā, Rohiṇī, Śulakatā, Tripurā Kurukullā, Candrāvatī, Yamaghaṇṭā, Krāntimukhā, etc. Hemachandra's *Abhidhānacintamaṇi* mentions cults of sixteen *Śruta* or *Vidyā* devīs, the eight Mothers such as Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, etc., the mothers of Tīrthaṁkaras such as Marudevī, Vijayā, etc., Śrī or Lakṣmī and a host of other goddesses. The Vidyādevis are Rohiṇī, Prajñapti, Vajra-śṛṁkhalā, Vajrāṁkuśā, Apraticakrā or Jambunandā, Puruṣadattā, Kālī, Mahākālī, Gaurī, Gāndārī Mahājvālā or Jvālāmālinī, Mānavī, Vairotī, Acyuptā, Mānasī, and Mahāmānasī. A good number of these deities must have come from the Yakṣiṇīs and Śāsanadevatās. Besides the sixteen Vidyādevīs, the Jains admit into their pantheon one Śrutadevī or Sarasvatī approximating very closely to the Brahmanical conception of the same goddess. Śrī or Lakṣmī has a prominent place in Jain literature. The conception of Lakṣmī in Jainism is very old as the goddess is mentioned in the *Kalpasūtra* as one of the objects of Triśalā's dream.

The cult of the sixty-four Yoginīs was also adopted by the Jains. Of their names found in the Jain works the following may be noted: Mahāyoginī, Siddhayoginī, Yugeśvarī, Pretākṣī, Ḍākinī, Kālī, Kālarātrī, Niśācarī, Klimkarī, Baṭṭālī, Bhūtaḍāmarī, Kumārikā, Caṇḍikā, Vārāhī, Kaṁkālī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Kuṇḍalī, Lakṣmī, Karālī, Visatī, Divyayogī, Gaṇeśvarī. Hṛmkarī, Siddhi, Vitālā, Phakari, Virabhadrāṁsī, Dhumrākṣī, Kalahapriyā, Rājasī, Ghoraraktāsī, Virupākṣī, Bhayaṁkarī,

Bairī, Jālakī, Yamadūtī, Karatāpanī, Kosakībhakṣiṇī, Yakṣa Kaumārī, Yantravāhinī, Kāmakī, Dhurjatī, Kiṁkarī, Kapālā, etc. It is interesting to note that although some of their names are common with the Brahmanic names of Yoginīs, the majority of them are quite original to Jainism. Of the Jain works dealing with the iconological characteristics of the goddesses, reference should be made, besides the *Ācāra Dinakara*, to Hemchandra's *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi* and *Triṣaṣṭi-śalākā-puruṣa-carita*, Vasunandi's *Pratiṣṭhā-sāra-saṁgraha* Jinasena's *Uttarapurāṇa* and also to such works as *Pratiṣṭhā-sāroddhāra*, *Nirvāṇakalikā*, *Mandira-pratiṣṭhā-vidhāna*, *Deva-puja*, *Catuḥṣaṣṭi-yogini-nāmāni*, etc. The Jain goddesses are many-handed, each holding a symbol significant to the creed. Their hands and feet are set in different *mudrās* or positions, analogous to those generally met with in Brahmanical and Buddhist images. The *varada* and *abhaya* mudrās are quite common to most of them.[226]

In the Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts, we come across a number of gods and goddesses. Scholars think that they were borrowed from the earlier and existing religious systems. The fact was that the converts in Buddhism and Jainism, although they were deeply influenced by the ethical values upheld by these systems had not entirely given up their traditional faiths and cults. The gods that made their way into these newly evolved creeds had to be given a position of honour for practical considerations. In the Pali texts, which are said to contain the theoretical viewpoint of the so-called Hīnayānists, these gods are given place in the Devalokas and Brahmalokas and regarded as inferior only to the Buddha. They are not supreme. Of the early Buddhist goddesses, the Earth Mother, Pṛthivī (Pathavi) or Dharaṇī, and the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmi (Lakkhī) or Śrī (Siri), are most important.

The *Abhidhānappadīpikā* says that Siri-Lakkhī is a synonym of the goddess of beauty and prosperity. The commentary on the *Sumaṅgala Jātaka*[227] describe her as the goddess of *parivāra-sampatti* (family property) and *paññā* (wisdom). In the *Sālikedāsa*, *Dhajavihetha* and *Siri-Kālakaṇṇi* Jātakas[228] she is regarded as the goddess of fortune, wisdom and virtue. In the *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka*[229] it is stated that Lakkhī does not forsake a wise man who is grateful, tender, heart-winning and gracious. The Buddhist Lakkhī conceptually is a combination of Brahm-

anical Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī since she is also a goddess of wisdom. There is also a separate goddess called Sarasvatī. The *Cūlavaṁsa* mentions a Buddhist king who established a *Sarasvatī-maṇḍapa*. King Parakkamabahu I of Ceylon built it near his palace at Pulatthipura. The *Dhammapadaṭṭakathā*[230] mentions her as *rājya-sirī-dāyikā-devatā*, who bestows kingdom, property and fortune. The *Cūlavaṁsa*[231] mentions Vīralakkhī, the goddess who gives success to the hero in the battle. In the *Siri-Kālakaṇṇi Jātaka*, Siri is described as the daughter of Dhatarattha who came down to earth through the air with raiment and ointment of golden hue and ornament of golden brightness diffusing yellow light. She loved a merchant and lived with him in his time of distress. She favoured him because he was gentle, friendly, righteous, liberal, guileless, honest, upright, winning, bland and meek in high place. These qualities are required to earn her favour. The goddess Lakkhī lives in four objects—a fowl, a gem, a club and a wife. The antithesis of this goddess is Alakkhī identified with Kālakaṇṇī. The aforesaid Jātaka describes her as the daughter of king Virupākkha who came down to earth through the air with blue raiment, ointment and jewels, diffusing a blue (unlucky mark) light. She loves him who is hypocritical, wanton, morose, envious, greedy and treacherous.

In the Mahāyānic Buddhist texts we come across an abundance of goddesses, since Mahāyānism represents the popular aspects of Buddhism. In different ramifications of Mahāyānism, the goddesses came to exert an ever-increasing influence. The Ādi Buddha of the Vajrayāna group found a consort in Prajñāpāramitā known in many other names. His emanations, the Dhyānī Buddhas, had each obtained a divine consort or *Śakti* of his own, namely Vajrasattvātmikā, Locanā, Māmakā, Paṇḍarā and Ārya-Tārā respectively. The Kālacakrayāna introduced a host of awe-inspiring and terrible goddesses, dreadful fiends known as Ḍakinīs, to be appeased with *mantra* (charms), magic circles, offerings and sacrifices. Later Buddhism is, in fact, nothing but a disguised Tantric cult of the Female Principle. Earlier Mahāyānic texts initiate the cult of the Female Principle (this is to be discussed in a subsequent chapter), and in the texts of Tantric Buddhism like the *Guhyasamāja* or the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* we come across a well

developed form of this cult. The *Sādhanamālā* is the most valuable work on Buddhist iconology which records the latest advances in Vajrayāna doctrines. The *Nispaṇṇayogāvalī* is a work on the *Maṇḍalas* and is remarkable for its richness of information. It contains in all twenty-six *Maṇḍalas* in twenty-six chapters, all these *Maṇḍalas* describing numerous deities of Tantric Buddhism. Besides these, other works, such as the *Heruka* and *Hevajra* Tantras. *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa-tantra*, *Vajravārāhī-tantra*, *Kriyāsamuccaya*, *Vajrāvali-nāma-maṇḍalopāyikā*, *Yoginījāla-tantra*, *Abhidhānottara-tantra*, etc., throw a flood of light on the Buddhist goddesses. The *Advaya-vajrasaṃgraha*, edited by M.M. Haraprasad Sastri, which consists of nineteen short works, should also be mentioned in this connection.

A number of gods and goddesses are described in the *Mañjuśrīmūla kalpa* which is believed to be an earlier work than the *Guhyasamāja*, but it is in the latter work that we come across for the first time the idea of a complete pantheon, five Dhyānī Buddhas, their *mantras*, their *maṇḍalas* and their *śaktis* or female counterparts. The Dhyānī Buddhas are described as the progenitors of the five *Kulas* or families of gods and goddesses. In later texts things are more systematized, but the number and attributes of the deities increased. In Vajrayāna, the highest god Ādi-Buddha or Vajradhara, whose doctrine is explained in *Kālacakra-tantra*, is the embodiment of Śūnya to whom the Dhyānī Buddhas owe their origin. His Śakti or female counterpart is Prajñāpāramitā, often represented in yab-yum, in close embrace with her male partner. The Dhyānī Buddhas and their Śaktis are mentioned in detail in the *Guhyasamāja*. Pāṇḍarā or Pāṇḍaravāsinī is the Śakti of Amitābha, Māmakī of Akṣobhya, Locanā of Vairocana, Tārā of Amoghasiddhi, Vajradhātvīśvarī of Ratnasambhava and Vajrasattvātmikā of Vajrasattva. Next come the mortal Buddhas and their Śaktis. The Hīnayānists recognise twenty-four bygone Buddhas. The Mahāyānists have several lists from which thirty-two different names have been recovered. The last seven are Vipaśyin, Śikhi, Viśvabhū, Krākucchanda, Kaṇakamuni, Kaśyapa and Śākyasiṃha and their Śaktis are Vipaśyanti, Śikhimālinī, Viśvadharā, Kakudvatī, Kaṇṭhamālinī, Mahīdharā and Yaśodharā respectively. Besides the Dhyānī and Mānuṣi (mortal) Buddhas there are the

Bodhisattvas and their Śaktis. The Bodhisattvas represent a class of deities who derive their origin from the Dhyānī Buddhas. Their female counterparts are known by the general name of Śaktis.

The female divinities that emanate from the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha are three in number—Kurukullā, Bhṛkuti and Mahāśītavatī. Emanations of Akṣobhya are the goddesses Mahācīnatārā, Jāṅguli, Ekajaṭā, Vidyujjālākarālī, Parṇaśabarī, Prajñāpāramita, Vajracarcikā, Mahāmantrānusārinī, Mahāpratyaṅgirā, Dhvajāgrakeyurā, Vasudhārā, Nairātmā, Jñānaḍākinī and Vajravidāraṇī. Emanations of Vairocana are Mārīcī, Uṣṇīṣavijayā, Sitātapatrā Aparajitā, Mahāsahasrapramardanī, Vajravārāhī, Cundā and Grahamātrikā, of Amoghasiddhi Khadiravanī Tārā, Mahaśrī Tārā, Vaśya Tārā, Saḍbhūjā Sitatārā, Dhanada Tārā, Sita Tārā, Parṇaśabarī, Mahāmāyurī, Vajraśṛṃkhalā and Vajragāndhārī, and of Ratnasambhava Vajratārā, Mahapratisarā, Vasudhārā, Aparājita, Vajrayoginī and Prasanna Tārā.

The Buddhist goddesses, although many of them like Parṇaśabarī, etc., were adopted from tribal religious systems with which Mahayanism came in compromise, are basically different from the non-Buddhist goddesses in character and conception. They are mere abstractions of some ideas by which different forms of Buddhism are characterized. The tribal goddesses, as we have seen above, stood for practical purposes. They represented facts of life. The Harappan Mother Goddess was basically an Earth Mother presiding over the functions of generation and fertility. Even the Vedic goddesses represent different natural phenomena and concern themselves with physical, atmospheric and astral myths. The goddesses of the Epics and Purāṇas are syncretistic products revealing in their conception a prolonged historical evolution. It is a fact that the existing cults of the Female Principle exerted a tremendous influence on Buddhism and practically saturated it. But the goddesses that were produced in Buddhism under such an influence lacked concreteness. The Buddhists started an unrelenting process of deification by turning all objects, cosmic and philosophical principles, literature, letters of the alphabet, the directions and even the desires into gods and goddesses, with forms, colour, poses of sitting, and weapons.

Thus we have six goddesses of direction presiding over the six quarters, their names being Vajrāṅkuśī, Vajrapāśī, Vajrasphoṭā, Vajraghaṇṭā, Uṣṇīṣavijayā and Sumbhā. Five protectresses or Rakṣā deities are popular among the Mahāyāna Buddhist. The *Pañcarakṣā* mentions them as Mahapratisarā, Mahāsahasrapramardinī, Mahāmantrānusāriṇī, Mahāsitavatī and Mahāmāyūrī. Besides, there are innumerable Tārā-devīs classified on the basis of colour. Tārās of the green group comprise Khadiravanī-tārā, Vaśya-tārā, Ārya-tārā, Mahattarī-tārā, Varada-tārā, Durgottāriṇī-tārā, Jāṅguli and Parṇaśabarī, of the white group Aṣṭamahābhaya-tārā, Mṛtyuvañcana-tārā, Caturbhūja-sitatārā, Ṣaḍbhūja-sitatārā, Viśvamātā, Kurukullā and Jāṅguli, of the yellow group Vajra-tārā, Jāṅguli, Parṇaśabarī and Bhṛkuti, of the blue group Ekajaṭā and Mahācīna-tārā and of the red group Kurukullā. Eight deities of the Gaurī group of goddesses are Gaurī, Caurī, Vetālī, Ghasmārī, Pukkasī, Śabarī, Caṇḍālī and Ḍombī. There are four dance goddesses known as Lāsyā, Mālā, Gītā and Nṛtyā and four personifying musical instruments, Vaṃśā, Vīṇā, Mukundā and Murajā. Four door goddesses are known as Tālikā, Kuñcī, Kapāṭā and Paṭadhāriṇī, and four light goddesses as Suryahastā, Dīpā, Ratnalokā and Taḍitkarā, four animal-faced goddesses as Hayāsyā, Śūkarāsyā, Svānāsyā and Siṃhāsyā and four Ḍākinīs as Ḍakinī, Lāmā, Khaṇḍarohā and Rūpiṇī.

In Buddhism, the Twelve Pāramitās are considered to be the perfections of cardinal virtues which entitle one to Buddha-hood. They are conceived in the forms of goddesses. Similar is the case with the others, such as the Twelve Vaśitās on spiritual disciplines, the Twelve Bhūmis or the successive spiritual spheres and the Twelve Dhāriṇīs or sacred chain of words. The twelve Pāramitā goddesses are Ratnā, Dāna, Śila, Kṣānti, Vīrya, Dhyāna, Prajñā, Upāya, Praṇidhāna, Bala, Jñāna and Vajrakarma. The twelve Vaśitā goddesses are Āyu, Citta, Parikṣā, Karma, Utpatti, Ṛddhi, Adhimukti, Praṇidhāna, Jñāna, Dharma, Tathatā and Buddhabodhiprabhā. The twelve Bhūmi goddesses are Adhimukticaryā, Pramuditā, Vimalā, Prabhākarī, Arciṣmatī, Sudurjayā, Abhimukhi, Duraṅgamā, Acalā, Sādhumatī, Dharmameghā and Samantaprabhā. The twelve Dhāriṇī goddesses are Sumati, Ratnalokā, Uṣṇīṣavijayā, Mārī, Parṇaśabarī, Jāṅguli, Anantamukhi, Cundā, Prajñāvardhanī,

Sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanī, Akṣayajñānakaraṇḍā and Sarva-buddhadharmakoṣavatī.

We have already had occasion to refer to the nature of the goddesses mentioned so abundantly in the Buddhist literature, especially in that of the later period. These deities have no myths and legends and their functional role is very limited. They are products of psychic exercises and are believed to be visualized by the worshipper in the course of intense meditation. The figures thus conceived form the basis of Buddhist iconology which has now become a very interesting and fascinating element in Buddhist studies.[232]

GODDESSES IN SOUTH INDIAN LITERATURE

The currency of the cult of the female principle in South India in the early centuries of the Christian era is amply indicated in early Tamil literature, the Saṅgam classics, in which occur such goddesses as Amarī, Kumārī, Gaurī, Śamarī, Śūlī, Nīlī, Aiyai, Sayyaval Koṛṛavai, Nallāl, Kaṇṇi, Śaṅkarī, etc. Of the goddesses, Kumārī, the Virgin goddess Kanyākumārī of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* who gave her name to the southern-most point of India, is mentioned in the *Periplus*.

> Beyond this there is another place called Comari at which are the cape of Comari and a harbour; hither come those men who wish to consecrate for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celebacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess here dwelt and bathed.[233]

The next important goddess is Koṛṛavai, the great mother of Muruga,[234] identified with Malaimangal,[235] daughter of the mountain, i.e., Pārvatī. Her dance was known as *tuṇaṅgai*. According to the *Tolkappiyam*, the earliest Tamil grammatical work, Koṛṛavai was the goddess of the region of Palai. This goddess is frequently mentioned in early Tamil literature, as we shall see later.

The story of the deification of a human being called Kaṇṇaki into Pattanikaḍavul, the goddess of chastity, is met with in the great Tamil epic *Silappadikāram* (second century A.D.). This

lady destroyed the city of Madurā by fire to avenge the execution of her husband Kovalan. Kosar, the king of Kaṅgu, Gajabāhu, the king of Laṅkā, Peruṅk-killi, the Cola king, and the Cera king Senguttuvan erected temples and instituted festivals in her honour. The Bhagavatī temple at Cranganore in Kerala, dedicated to Bhadrakālī, whose wrath is supposed to be the cause of all epidemic diseases, is said to have been founded between the years A.D. 115-25 by Senguttuvan Perumal to commemorate the tragic end of Kaṇṇaki, the heroine of the *Silappadikāram*.[236] The goddess enshrined at Cranganore, according to the popular tradition, goes by the name of Oṛṛaimulaicci, i.e., the goddess with one breast. Kaṇṇaki is said to have cut off one of her breasts when she cursed the city at the death of Kovalan.

How and when the Kaṇṇaki cult was assimilated with and finally absorbed into the Kālī or Bhagavatī cult cannot be ascertained at our present state of knowledge. In the *Silappadikāram*[237] we have references to the worship of Kālī. On their way to Madura, Kaṇṇaki and Kovalan stopped at a Kālī temple where they witnessed a weird dance of the priestess of Kālī who, attired like a dread goddess, stood up in the village common, trembling all over as if she was possessed by a devil, and declared in horrific tones that the goddess Kālī was angry, as the Maravar had not offered any sacrifice at her temple for sometime past.

In the *Silappadikāram* also occur such goddesses as Aryāṇī, Aiyai Kumārī, Āpya, Antari, Bārati, Pitāri, Māyaval, Koṛṛavai, etc. Aryāṇī is the Tamil name of Indrāṇī. Aiyai Kumārī is the goddess worshipped by the Vaḍuvar or Maravar and she is known by different names. Pitāri or Cāmuṇḍā is conceived as one of the seven Lokamātās or Divine Mothers. We have already referred to the goddess Koṛṛavai, known as the goddess of victory. The Eyinor of Palai worshipped her and sacrificed buffaloes at her temple. According to the *Silappadikāram*,[238] peacocks and parrots, fowls, sandal, grains and oblations of rice with flesh and blood were offered to her. Her hair was matted. She was clad in skins of tiger and cobra while a stag was her vehicle. She was so much dreaded that when once the doors of her shrine could not be opened, the Pāṇḍya king felt that it was due to the divine displeasure and sought her mercy

by the grant of the revenue of two villages for her worship.[239] According to the *Kalittogai*[240] the she-devils taught her how to dance while the *Kuruntogal*[241] calls her Śūli, i.e., wielder of the trident.

The idea that Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Pārvatī, etc., represent different aspects of the same power is evident from the *Venba* in Canto XXII of the *Silappadikāram*. The cult of Durgā is also found in the *Veṭṭuvavari* of the same epic. Durgā is described as:

> having a body, the colour (dark blue) of which resembles that of a flower of the *Kaya* (Memecylon edule), lips red like the coral, teeth white and neck dark, with a third eye on the crescent like forehead, holding the discus and conch, sword and *śūla* (spear) and the bow which was the *meru* (nedumalai) strung with the snake Vasuki as its *ñān* (bow-string), wearing the skin of tiger and a belt (*mekalai*) of lion's skin, a *Kaḷal* (hero's calf-band) on one leg and *śilambu* (woman's anklet) on the other, with a coiffure of *jaṭā* adorned by a serpent and a crescent moon, covering herself with the hide of the elephant as Uttarīya (*ekāśam*), wearing a snake as her breast-band (*kaccu*), carrying a standard of lion (*āḷikkodi*).[242]

The goddess standing on the cut-off head of a buffalo, a frequent sculptural representation of South India, is found in the epic which also describes her fight with the Asuras, her killing of Dāruka and Mahiṣāsura. The worship of Maṇimekalai, the chief guardian deity of the sea, is seen throughout the South Indian epics, especially in the *Maṇimekalai* (second century A.D.). In the said epic, she acted as the guide of the heroine who was her namesake.[243] Another goddess who is mentioned with special importance in the *Maṇimekalai*[244] is Cintā Devī who is said to have given a cup to Aputra, a pious youth of obscure origin. The *Maṇimekalai* also refers to a forest goddess called Kāḍamarśelvi[245] who was also known as Kāḍuraikaḍavul, Moti, Karitay, etc. She is depicted as standing with a beggar's bowl and generally worshipped in temples adjacent to burial grounds.

GODDESSES IN THE PURANAS

In the Purāṇas we find how numerous local goddesses under different historical conditions have been identified with one supreme goddess who is the embodiment of the all-pervading Female Principle, the primal source of creation. This Female Principle has become the consort of Viṣṇu in Vaisnavism and that of Śiva in Saivism, but in the Śākta religion, which is the supreme manifestation of the Mother Goddess cult, she is all in all, the producer of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, all of them being subordinate to her. Viṣṇu and Śiva are given more emphasis in the Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivaite Purāṇas, but it is in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and later Śākta Purāṇas that the glory of the goddess is revealed in its fullest extent.

The relation between Śiva and Devī became more intimate in the Gupta period as is suggested by the evidence of the earlier Purāṇas. The story of Dakṣa's sacrifice must serve a good example. The *Mahābhārata* contains a Dakṣa-yajña story, according to which Śiva and Devī, not being invited at the sacrifice of Dakṣa, due to the ignorance of the latter of Śiva's existence, destroyed in anger the sacrificial materials through their agents Vīrabhadra and Mahākālī. This brought Dakṣa to senses, and thereafter he propitiated Śiva and was taught by the latter the mysteries of his cult. The story has further been developed in the Purāṇas. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*,[246] composed between the third and the fifth centuries A.D., holds that Satī, the oldest of the eight daughters of Dakṣa, was married to Śiva, but the latter never bothered to salute his father-in-law or to conceal his roughness. Satī's death and the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice are described in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* in two episodes. The first says that Satī, the wife of Śiva was shocked at receiving a cool reception from her father, and destroyed her body, whereupon Śiva cursed Dakṣa. On the other hand, Satī was reborn as Umā in the house of Himālaya and married to Śiva. The second story describes the events of Dakṣa's sacrifice, which occurred when the Devī was no longer the daughter of Dakṣa. The *Matsya Purāṇa*[247] composed about the seventh century A.D., says that Rudra or Śiva was not invited because Dakṣa thought him a malevolent spirit unworthy of a rank among gods. Further development of the story of

Dakṣa's sacrifice, found in subsequent Puranic literature, will be discussed later.

The Śākta principles find expression in the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (composed between the third and fifth centuries A.D.) in which the goddess is invoked thus:

> Thou art the cause of all the worlds. Though characterised by three qualities, even by Hari, Hara and other gods thou art incomprehensible. Thou art the resort of all; thou art the entire world which is composed of parts. Thou verily art the sublime original nature untransformed...Thou art Medhā, O Goddess, thou hast comprehended the essence of all scriptures. Thou art Durgā, the boat to cross the ocean of existence, devoid of attachments. Thou art Śrī who has her dominion in the heart of the enemy of Kaitabha. Thou art indeed Gaurī who has fixed her dwelling in that of the moon-crested god.'[248]

In the concluding portion of the *Devīmāhātmya*, the Devī assures the gods by granting them the boon that she will always become incarnate and deliver the world whenever it is oppressed by the demons. Born as the offspring of Yaśodā and dwelling in the Vindhyas she will destroy Śumbha and Niśumbha; as Raktadantikā she will devour the demons of the Vipracitti lineage; as Śatākṣi she will appear during the time of drought and nourish the whole world as Śākambharī; as Durgā she will kill the Asura Durgama; as Bhīmā she will destroy the Rākṣasas on the Himavat; and as Bhrāmarī she will slay the demon Aruṇa.'[249]

We have already had occasion to identify Gaurī, Śatākṣi and Śākambharī as developed forms of rudimentary Earth and Corn Mothers. Raktadantikā, also called Raktacāmuṇḍā and Yogeśvarī,[250] is definitely a survival of the primitive Mother Goddess representing the age when red was considered to be the symbol of new life. Reference has already been made to Bhīmāsthāna mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and Bhīmādevī mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. The goddess Bhrāmarī is worshipped in Kashmir as Bhramaravāsinī.[251] A goddess named Bhramarāmmā is popular in the South. Durgā, as we have previously remarked, was associated with inaccessible regions

and it is possible that she was originally conceived as the protectress of forts (*durga*) A fanciful explanation of her name was, however, invented on etymological grounds by associating her with the slaying of a demon called Durgama.

Whether a demon-slayer or saviour, Durgā is equipped with many arms, a feature which is totally absent in the conception of Pārvatī-Umā who is extremely homely as the daughter of Himavat, wife of Śiva, and mother of Kumāra. It is interesting to note that, of the earlier Purāṇas, the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa* and *Matsya* and of the later, the *Kūrma*, *Śiva*, *Garuḍa*, *Brahma*, etc., do not insist upon the demon-slaying conception of the goddess and her terrible forms. It is in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Vāmana* Purāṇas, and also in the Devī-oriented Purāṇas that we have her terrible demon-slayer form which is represented by Caṇḍikā or Kauśikī and further developed by Kālī. The goddess Kauśikī was probably associated with the Kuśika tribes, and later came to be identified with Caṇḍikā. According to the Devīmāhātmya of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Kauśikī emerged from the muscles of Pārvatī, and the latter turned black and became known as Kālikā dwelling in the Himalayas. According to another conception of the same text, Kālī emerged from the forehead of Caṇḍikā with the purpose of killing the demons Caṇḍa and Maṇḍa, and having accomplished the task, she received the epithet Cāmuṇḍā. From a grammatical point of view, however, Cāmuṇḍā cannot be derived from Caṇḍa-Muṇḍa, and hence Camuṇḍā and Kālī were different goddesses. Kauśikī, Caṇḍikā, Kālī, etc., were evidently adopted in the Śākta pantheon from the surviving tribal divinities. Kāli in Kālañjara, Caṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhyas are mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*[252] as the manifestations of the supreme goddess, and her particular interest for wine and meat is found in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.[253] Aparṇā, a name by which Kālī is sometimes identified, signifies a deity 'without her leaf cloth'. This naked goddess must have originally been worshipped by a tribe such as the Nagna-Śabaras (the naked-Śabaras) of the *Bṛhat-saṃhitā*, just as the Buddhist deity Parṇaśabarī was undoubtedly associated with the Parṇaśabaras (the leaf-clad Śabaras) of the same work.

In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the Devī is primarily conceived as the war goddess who not only confers victory and success on

her worshippers in the battlefield but also actually participates in the war to deliver the world whenever it is oppressed by the demons. The gods being oppressed by the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha went to the Himalayas and worshipped the goddess, whereupon Śivā or Kauśikī appeared from the *Kośa* (frame or muscle) of Pārvatī and said that it was she whom the gods were invoking for killing the demons. This Kauśikī is also identified with Kātyāyanī, Vindhyavāsinī, Caṇḍikā and Nandā. The name Kauśikī, as we have already pointed out, was connected with the Kuśika tribe, and the legend of her coming out from the *Kośa* of Pārvatī was evidently invented to rationalize the role of the tribal goddess into the framework of the Śākta conception of the Devī. The same holds good in the case of Kātyāyanī, who probably belonged to the Kātya tribe, but it is stated that a mass of energy produced from the flames of the gods' anger caused by the misdeeds of Mahiṣāsura, was thrown into the hermitage of the sage Kātyāyana who nourished it to create the goddess. The goddess thus produced came to be known as Kātyāyanī to whom Śiva gave his trident, Viṣṇu his disc, Varuṇa his conch, Agni his dart, Yama his iron rod, Vāyu his bow, Surya his quiver and arrows, Indra his thunderbolt, Kubera his mace, Brahmā his rosary and pot, Kāla his sword, Viśvakarma his sword, Himavān his lion, and other gods their various weapons. Vindhyavāsinī, as the name implies, was a regional deity who came to be identified with Caṇḍikā, Kauśīkī and Kātyāyanī, and especially with Nandā, the offspring of Yaśodā in the house of Nandagopa, who was made responsible for the slaying of Śumbha and Niśumbha.

Of all the major achievements of the Devī, the story of her fight with Mahiṣāsura became most popular, as is proved by numerous Mahiṣamardini sculptures. The Mahiṣāsura episode of the *Devīmāhātmya* suggests in itself a nice outline of the Śākta conception of the Devī as the embodiment of an all-pervading power. The gods, being defeated and driven out of heaven by Mahiṣāsura, hastened for protection to Viṣṇu and Śiva. Having heard their grievances, Viṣṇu, Śiva and other gods emitted flames of anger from their eyes, and this was transformed into a mass of intense energy which, shortly afterwards, took the shape of an exquisite lady, called Caṇḍikā, whose face was made by Śiva's energy, hair by Yama's arms, by Viṣṇu's,

breasts by moon's, waist by Indra's, legs by Varuṇa's, lips by the earth's, feet by Brahmā's, toes by Sun's, hands and fingers by Vasu's, nose by Kubera's, teeth by Prajāpati's, eyes by Agni's, and ears by Vāyu's. The conception of the goddess, her creation from the energy of all the gods, became popular with the Śāktas, and it was further elaborated in later Purāṇas.

The Mātṛkās or Divine Mothers play a very important role in the Devī legends. In the *Mahābhārata* we came across numerous Mātṛkās associated with Skanda, and they had also access in Jainism and other religious systems. In the Purāṇas, they are regarded as the offshoots of the goddess Kauśikī or Caṇḍikā, some of them like Vaiṣṇavī, Kālikā, etc., often identified with the Devī herself. There are different versions of the origin of the Mātṛkās in the Purāṇas. (i) When Śiva's spear pierced the heart of the demon Andhaka, each drop of the latter's blood created a demon. This enraged Śiva and from his body emerged the goddess Yogeśvarī, and at the same time Vaiṣṇavī, Brahmāṇī, Kaumārī, Indrāṇī, Māheśvarī, Cāmuṇḍā, and Vārāhī appeared from the bodies of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Kumāra, Indra, Maheśvara, Yama and Varāha respectively. They drank and drained all the blood that fell from Andhaka's body and the purpose of the gods was served. (ii) When the Asura Śumbha sent Raktavīja to fight against the Devī, the latter uttered a fearful war-cry when Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumārī, Vārāhī and Nārasiṃhī emerged out of her mouth. The seventh, viz., Caṇḍamārī or Cāmuṇḍā had already sprung from the Devī's body when the latter was engaged in war with Ruru, a general of Śumbha, and each drop of blood that fell from the body of Raktavīja was drunk by Cāmuṇḍā alone.[251] The *Varāha Purāṇa*[255] says that Yogeśvarī is the symbol of lust, Maheśvarī of anger, Vaiṣṇavī of greed, Kaumārī of attachment, Brahmāṇī of pride, Aindrī of jealousy, Cāmuṇḍā of depravity and Vārāhī of envy. According to their iconographic descriptions, Brahmāṇī is four-armed and four-headed, seated on a swan, bearing a rosary and a water-pot from which she sprinkles water with *Kuśa*; Māheśvarī is seated on a bull wearing a *jaṭāmukuṭa* (matted hair locks dressed in a pyramidal form) and a crescent; Kaumārī is red-coloured and four-armed, carrying a *śakti* and seated on a peacock; she looks

like Kumāra, decked with red robe, necklace and a *keyura*, armed with *śūla* and *śakti* and surrounded by fowls; Vaiṣṇavī resembles Viṣṇu while Vārāhī a boar; her vehicle is the buffalo and she is armed with a club and a wheel; Indrāṇī or Aindrī is many-eyed, and she carries a thunderbolt, a spear and a club; her complexion is golden and her vehicle is the elephant; Cāmuṇḍā is three-eyed, fleshless and bony; she is clad in tiger-skin and seated on a corpse.[256]

As we have seen, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, while dealing with the exploits of the Śākta Devī, describes the Mahiṣa-mardinī episode in addition to some other accounts of the achievements of the goddess and the promise of her periodic appearance whenever the demons threaten the peace of gods. The Mahiṣamardinī theme was elaborated in later Purāṇas.[257] Other achievements of the Devī, like her slaying of the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha,[258] Vetra and Rudra,[259] are described in the Purāṇas. It is generally believed that it was one goddess who, in her different forms and manifestations, killed all these demons, but the fact is that they were different goddesses later identified with the supreme being of the Śāktas. One set of nine names of Durgā—Śaila-putrī, Brahmacāriṇī, Kātyāyanī, Kālarātri, Mahāgaurī, and Siddhidātrī—practically sketches her career and functions. Another better known set is composed of Ugracaṇḍā, Pracaṇḍā, Candogrā, Caṇḍanāyikā, Caṇḍā, Caṇḍāvatī, Caṇḍarūpā, Aticaṇḍikā and Rudracaṇḍā—all signifying the wrathful aspect of the goddess. Pārvatī was differentiated into Durgā, Cāmuṇḍā, Mahiṣāsuramardinī and Mahālakṣmī while Cāmuṇḍā into Karālī, and Bhadrakālī, Kālabhadrā and Mahākalī. Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī, though widely worshipped as the respective patrons of learning and riches, practically remained wives of Brahmā and Viṣṇu in Brahmanical religions.

The Purāṇas enumerate 108 names and holy resorts of the great goddess. Some of three names are mythical but many of them indicate local goddesses later identified with the supreme being of the Śāktas. A complete list of 108 names of the goddess with specifications of her association with particular holy places is to be found for the first time in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[260] The same text has been quoted in the description

of the various manifestations of Bhadrakarṇikā (a form of the goddess) in the *Skanda Purāṇa*[261] as well as in the enumeration of the goddess Sāvitrī in the *Padma Purāṇa*.[262] The same text is also quoted in the *Devībhāgavata*[263] which refers to the holy places, associated with different manifestations of the goddess, as Pīṭhas. In the *Kurma Purāṇa*,[264] the Devī is invoked under more than 1000 names. Local variations, elaborations and fusions undoubtedly had characterized the evolution of these new names and forms of the goddesses.

In the *Devībhāgavata*,[265] the Śākta goddess is conceived as the Ādyā Śakti or primordial energy that resides in Brahmā as the creating principle, in Viṣṇu as the sustaining principle and in Śiva as the destructive principle. This Ādyā Śakti pervades all space and animates all things of this phenomenal world. The goddess who is unmanifested takes the three forms of Mahālakṣmī, Mahākālī and Mahāsarasvatī representing the *rājasa*, *sāttvika* and *tāmasa* attributes or *guṇas* of Prakṛti. Mahālakṣmī produces Brahma and Śrī, Mahākālī, Rudra and Trayī and Mahāsarasvatī, Viṣṇu and Umā. The union of Brahmā and Trayī produces the world, that of Viṣṇu and Śrī maintains it and that of Rudra and Umā destroys it. The Śākta Purāṇas also elaborate the exploits of the Devī mentioned in the earlier Purāṇas. In the *Devipurāṇa*,[266] she is conceived as the goddess of victory and is known by such names as Jayā, Vijayā, Aparājitā, Jayantī, etc. Here she is associated with the slaying of the demons like Ghora, Subala, Ruru and others.[267] Though the *Kālikā Purāṇa* does not narrate any description of war, it occasionally refers to the slaying of Mahiṣa and others.[268] The *Devībhāgavata*[269] records the Devī's fight with Mahiṣāsura, Śumbha-Niśumbha, Durgama and Aruṇa. The aforesaid Purāṇas also give a realistic picture of the local goddess later identified with the supreme being of the Śāktas and their holy resorts, of which mention will be made in a subsequent chapter.

In the Purāṇas we have also iconological descriptions of the goddesses. The *Agni Purāṇa*[270] describes the ten-armed Caṇḍikā as holding various weapons, riding a lion, and having Mahiṣa struck by her spear in her front. In another place it speaks of Caṇḍī as having twenty, eighteen and ten arms and of nine Durgās, all sixteen-armed, having different complexions, seated

in the *ālīḍha* pose on the lion, and catching the hair of the armed male emerging from a buffalo. The demon is described as bearing a spear, vomiting blood, having a red garland, hair and eyes, being mauled by a lion and having a noose strongly pressing his neck.[271] It also mentions the *Lalitā* form of Durgā as having her left hand on Skanda's head and holding a looking-glass in the right hand.[272] She is described as standing on a lotus, having two of her four hands on Skanda and Gaṇa (Gaṇeśa) and holding a looking-glass and a spear in the remaining two hands.[273] According to D.C. Sircar:

> This second Lalitā image representing the Devī with Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa seems to be close to the modern Durgā image of Bengal representing the goddess with Kārttikeya, Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. The modern Bengali conception of Durgā may be an extension of a combination of Lalitā of the *Agni Purāṇa* and Mahiṣamardinī . . . . The *Matsya Purāṇa*[274] also speaks of the image of Umā-Maheśvara flanked by Jayā, Vijayā, Kārttikeya and Vināyaka, and it will be closer to the Durgā image (which as Maheśvara in a small form above the head of the Devī) if Jayā and Vijayā are substituted by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.[275]

We shall have the occasion to have a further study of the Puranic sources in subsequent chapters.

GODDESSES IN OTHER LITERARY WORKS

We have numerous references to various goddesses in Sanskrit literature. The earlier myths and legends centring around different goddesses were utilised by the ancient writers for various purposes. The *Kumārasambhava* of Kālidāsa tells us the story of the birth of Kumāra, who was destined to kill the Asura Tāraka, through the union of Śiva and Pārvatī. Here we have stories of the resurrection of Satī, the first wife of Śiva, as Umā, her austerities to win her husband again, the burning of Madana, the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, their domestic life on Kailāsa, and so on. Kālidāsa was criticized by the earlier

authorities for the breach of propriety in depicting the love adventures of Śiva and Pārvatī. But it is interesting to note that in the epico-purāṇic literature of India, we have elaborate descriptions of the union of gods and goddesses, especially that of Śiva and Pārvatī, who are described as immeasurably lengthening the duration of sexual union. In the *Kumārasambhava*, love poetry has taken the form of an elegant and finished miniature, and has been grafted within the main body of the narrative. Kalidāsa imagines that Pārvatī was created by an assemblage of all the beautiful objects, set assiduously in their proper places, as if the creator was desirous of seeing beauty concentrated in one place. Following the *Kumārasambhava* tradition, many later poets have not hesitated to depict with lavish details the amours of their favourite gods and goddesses. Detailed descriptions of the physical beauty of the goddess are found in such works as the *Mūkapañcaśatī* or the *Caṇḍī-kuca-pañcāśikā*. In the former, Mūka-kavi describes in five hundred stanzas the physical charms and attributes of the goddess while in the latter the beauty of Caṇḍī's breast is described in fifty stanzas.

Often in poetical writings we come across some traditional descriptions revealing religious beliefs and ideals. Thus, in Kālidasa's *Raghuvaṁśa*[276] we have a description of Viṣṇu lying on the great serpent in the ocean with Lakṣmī rubbing his feet. As usual she bore the name Śrī, and the traditional epithets, Hrī (modesty), Medhā (talent), Dhṛti (patience), Puṣṭi (growth), Kṣānti (forgiveness), Lajjā (bashfulness), Kīrti (fame), Bhūti (prosperity), Rati (love), etc., are attributed to her. Originally Śrī and Lakṣmī, regarded as two personalities, were described as the two wives of Āditya. Later tradition, as we have seen, made Śrī and Mahāśvetā, the two wives of Sūrya, one on the either side of the sun-image. This was followed by the still later conception of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī as the two wives of Viṣṇu. In the *Vikramovasīya*[277] of Kālidāsa, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are rivals, jealous of each other. In the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana we are told that wealthy citizens used to flock every fortnight to the temple of the goddess Sarasvatī to enjoy dramatic performances, etc.

Kālī is referred to in the *Raghuvaṁśa*,[279] and in the *Kumārasambhava*[280] and is described as a Divine Mother. The

earliest reference to a Buddhist worshipper of Tārā is found in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*,[281] which was composed about the sixth century A.D. It also refers to the blood-thirsty goddess Kātyāyanī or Bhagavatī of Kusumapura. Śiva and Umā appear in the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravī, composed about the same time, in which the *Mahābhārata* story of the combat between Arjuna and Śiva in the guise of a Kirāta finds expression. Bāṇabhatta in whose time (seventh century A.D.) Śāktism became more or less an established religion, as is proved by his own poetry on the goddess, the *Caṇḍiśataka*, mentions in his *Kādambarī* the goddess cult of the wild Śabaras and the cruel rites involved therein. Also in his *Harṣacarita*, he refers to the destructive character of the goddess. The *Gauḍavaha* of Vākpati, composed about A.D. 725, describes vividly of the awe-inspiring atmosphere of the temple of Vindhyavāsinī, the goddess who was worshipped by the Śabaras with human sacrifice. It also deals with the slaying of the buffalo demon, the association of the goddess with the peacocks and her blood-thirsty character. In the *Mālatīmādhava*[282] of Bhavabhūti, we find that near Padmāvati there was a temple of the goddess Cāmuṇḍā, who was worshipped with regular human sacrifices. Aghoraghaṇṭa, a Kāpālika, kidnapped the heroine with a view to sacrificing her at the altar of the goddess. This eighth century authority not only testifies to the prevalence of human sacrifice before the goddess, but also to the interesting fact that the Kāpālikas were followers of the goddess cult. In the *Mattavilāsa-prahasana* (attributed to Pallava Mahendravarman I, c. 600-685 A.D.) a detailed account of the Kāpālikas and their cults is given.

In the *Harivaṃśa*[283] Umā was mentioned under the name Aparṇā as one of the three daughters of Himavat and Menakā. Aparṇā, while practising a severe penance, gave up food altogether. Her mother in anxiety tried to dissuade her crying out *U-mā*, i.e., 'O (my daughter) do not (practise penance)', whence Aparṇā came to be known as Umā. Aparṇā, originally a tribal deity later identified with Umā, really means 'one without leaves covering one's loins'. This 'naked goddess' may have originally been worshipped by naked aboriginal tribes such as the Nagna Śabaras (cf. the Parṇa Śabaras and their Goddess Parṇaśabarī). We have already referred to the Śabaras as worshippers of the Mother Goddess. The *Kālikā Purāṇa*[284]

clearly refers to this fact. We have also seen that the traditional interpretation of the name Umā is merely a fabrication and that the word is apparently the same as Dravidian *amma* meaning Mother. The *Amarakoṣa*[285] supports the *Harivaṃśa* tradition and mentions Umā and Aparṇā as the two names of Durgā, daughter of Himālaya and Menā, and wife of Śiva. Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava*[286] explains the word Umā by following the same tradition. The poet further explains the name Aparṇā by referring it to the fact that Umā, during the last state of her penance, did not take any food, not even dried leaves (*parṇa*) which she had been taking earlier.[287]

Hiuen Tsang's *Life* by Shaman Hwui Li tells us that in Ayodhya, robbers used to sacrifice a handsome young man before Durgā in autumn every year.[288] The *Kathāsaritsāgara*[289] refers many times to such human sacrifices before the goddess. In the *Rāmacarita*[290] of Sandhyākaranandin mention is made of the festivities associated with the worship of Umā, while the *Kālaviveka* of Jīmūtavāhana refers to the obscene festivals connected with the Mother Goddess cult. Of independent poetical works on the goddess, we have already had occasion to refer to Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka*. The *Devīśataka* of Ānandavardhana of Kashmir testifies to the popularity of the Mother Goddess cult in that region. Reference may also be made in this connection to the *Saundaryalaharī*, the well known ode to the goddess, attributed to Śaṅkara. It is in praise of the supreme being of the Śāktas. Reference has already been made to the *Mukapañcaśatī* or *Devīpañcaśatī*. The sophisticated cult of the goddess, which came to be known as Śāktism, its doctrines and philosophical aspects, dogmas and rituals, are vividly explained in numerous Sanskrit works belonging to a variety of religious sects and communities. We shall refer to all these in a subsequent chapter dealing with the cult of the Mother Goddess in terms of the existing advanced religions of India.

More important in this respect is the evidence furnished by the regional literatures. The spirit of the Mother Goddess cult was not confined within the limit of a single religion in the early and late medieval periods of Indian history. The *Cāraṇas* of Rajasthan composed verses and songs in praise of Mahiṣamardinī, Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā Mātājī, Karṇimātā, Nāganecjī and others. A large number of Rājasthani manuscripts now in the Anup

Sanskrit Library, Bikaner, mostly illustrated, give us sufficient proof of this. Folk songs written by Moonkhan Mev of Alwar and Jaichand Yati show that even the Muslims and Jains were not indifferent to the goddess cult. In the *Pṛthvīrāj Rāso* of Chand Bardai, one of the most popular works of Hindi literature, the goddess is invoked in many places in the forms of Caṇḍī, Cāmuṇḍā and Kālī. Many of the Devī legends are incorporated in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulasīdāsa who also composed a separate work entitled *Pārvatimaṅgala* which was inspired on the one hand by the *Kumārasambhava* and on the other by the Maṅgala Kāvyas of Bengal. His *Vinaya patrikā* contains two hymns dedicated to the goddess. The goddess Vindhyavāsinī of Mirzapur is an interesting figure in popular Hindi literature to whom is dedicated a type of poems called *Cālisā*, each containing forty verses. Apart from this *Vindyeśvarī-Cālisā*, other folk songs in praise of the goddess are found, a good number of which have been collected by Ahlad Misra. Subsequently, *Durgā-cālisās* and *Śakti-cālisās* came into vogue, and these were recited during the worship of the goddess. Guru Govind Singh, the tenth *guru* of the Sikhs, composed the *Caṇḍi-di-var*.

In Maithili literature, numerous poems were composed in praise of Śiva and Devī and these were mainly concerned with the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, their married life and family life. The celebrated poet Vadyāpati was also included among the writers of such poems. Locana's *Rāgataraṅgiṇī* contains a number of devotional songs dedicated to the goddess Kālī. In Nepal, Bhupatindra Malla composed more than fifty songs of Mother Goddess in Maithili, which formed the subject matter of his *Bhāṣāsaṅgīta*. A good number of dramas, centring round Śiva-Devī theme, were composed in Maithili. Of such works reference should be made to Jagajyotirmalla's *Hara-Gaurī-Vivāha*, Jitamitramalla's *Bhāratanātakam*, Vaṃśamani Jha's *Gītadigambara*, Līlā Kavi's *Gaurī-Svayaṃvara*, Śivadatta's *Gaurī-Pariṇaya*, Kānhāram Dāsa's *Gaurī-Svyaṃvara*, etc. Lāla Dāsa's *Sāṅga Durgā Prakāśikā* is a Maithili translation of the *Devimāhātmya*. Gunavantlal Dāsa composed his *Gaurī-pariṇaya-prabandha* on the basis of the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*. Riddhināṭha Jha's *Satī Bhibhūti* and Bāṇesvara Jha's *Devī Gitā* are also important contribution to the Mother Goddess cult.

The temple chronicle of Orissa, the *Mādala Pāñji*, gives details of the cult of seven Mothers whose images were installed by Bhimakeśara. It also mentions the construction of the Sāmālāi temple of Sambalpur by one Yadukeśarī. Sāralā Dāsa's *Caṇḍī-Purāṇa* deals with the Puranic and popular legends of the Devī. In his *Bilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇā* Sītā is identified with the great goddess who killed the hundred-thousand-headed Rāvaṇa. Besides his chosen deity Sāralā, his *Mahābhārata* deals with such goddesses as Ugratārā, Cāceśvarī, Baseli, Maheśvarī, Kālikā, Kaṅkālī, Ahimukhī, Jambukī, etc. Jagannātha Dāsa composed a work on Śaiva-Śākta doctrine which came to be known as *Tulabhina*. In the *Bāta Abakāśa* of Balarāma Dāsa, Lord Jagannātha is described as being attended upon by sixty-four Yoginīs, Kātyāyanīs Sapta Mātṛkā, Vimalā and Virajā. The work also mentions seventy-six local goddesses identified with different aspects of Śakti. The *Prācīmāhātmya* of Dvija Trilocana mentions deities like Caṇḍaghaṇṭā, Rāma-Caṇḍī, Bhagavatī, etc. The Orissa State Museum contains several Tantric manuscripts, and in this context reference may be made to Jagannātha Acarya's *Durgāyajñadīpikā*, Keśava Ratha's *Tāriṇīkulasudhātaraṅgiṇī*, Govinda Misra's *Sāradārcanā Paddhati* and Raghunātha Dāsa's *Vanadurgāpūjā*.

In Assamese literature Rāmasarasvatī's *Bhīmacarita* deals with the domestic life of Śiva and Pārvatī. The cult of Manasā was popular in Assam and we know of three *Manasāmaṅglas* (poems in praise of the goddess Manasā) composed respectively by Mānakara, Durgāvara and Sukanāni between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, Rucinātha and Raṅganātha translated the *Devīmāhātmya* into Assamese. Ananta Ācārya's *Ānandalaharī*, composed about the same period, was an adaptation of *Saundaryalaharī* attributed to Śaṅkara. In Bengali literature, the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttivāsa (fifteenth century A.D.) contains the story of Rāma's Durgā worship before his final encounter with Rāvaṇa. It is interesting to note that in the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*,[291] a late work highly favoured by the Kashmirian Śāktas, Sītā, assuming the form of Kālī, is stated to have killed Rāvaṇa and this tradition is maintained in most of the regional *Rāmāyaṇas*. The story of Behulā and Lakhindar, the adventures of Lausena, the story of the merchant Dhanapati and his son Śrīmanta and of Kālaketu

and Phullarā were current in popular narrative poems, and these formed the nucleus of the *Maṅgalakāvyas* which became treasures of Bengali literature by 1600 A.D. The purpose of these *Maṅgalakāvyas* was to popularize the cults of the lower goddesses among the higher section of the peoples and to identify them with different manifestations of the Śākta Devī. Besides the *Manasāmaṅgalas*, there are works like *Ṣaṣthīmaṅgala*, *Śītalāmaṅgala* and *Kamalāmaṅgala* in praise of goddesses Ṣaṣthī, Śītalā and Kamalā, all regarded as manifestations of the great goddess.

More important in this respect are the *Caṇḍimaṅgalas*, in which two goddesses, Caṇḍī of the Purāṇas and the local goddess Maṅgalā, who is worshipped by women on every Tuesday, are merged in one. This Maṅgalacaṇḍī bestows wealth and happiness upon her worshippers, but if anyone offends her she takes terrible revenge. Of the writers of the *Caṇḍimaṅgalas*, Dvija Mādhava and Mukundarāma Cakravartī are most important, both of whom flourished in the sixteenth century. The *Caṇḍimaṅgalas* contains the stories of Kālaketu, Dhanapati and Śrīmanta who made their fortune by the grace of the goddess. In Mukundarāma's *Caṇḍimaṅgala* we come across details of Śakti worship including the legends of Dakṣa's sacrifice and of Śatī's death, the conception of the ten Mahāvidyās, the tradition of the *Pīthas* and other allied subjects. In subsequent works of this type, we come across a completely huṃanized form of the goddess, the sorrows and joys of her domestic life with her poor old husband Śiva, who does not know how to earn, and a lot of children always crying for food. The goddess is conceived as a young lady who, according to the custom of the land, is married at an early age and taken away from her parents to the poor household of her husband, whence she visits her paternal home only occasionally. This human conception of the Devī and her impoverished household has further been elaborated in works like Rāmeśvara's *Śivāyana* and in later Śākta lyrics.

GODDESSES IN SOME EPIGRAPHICAL RECORDS

Śrī or Lakṣmī as the goddess of wealth and prosperity occurs in the invocational stanzas of many a inscription. The

Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela throws light on the conception of this deity in the first century B.C. The phrase *sirikaḍāra*, found therein has been explained by Sten Konow as 'the lover of Śrī.' The exact significance of the expression is, however, a subject of controversy among scholars, but it should be noted in this connection that the representation of Śrī or Lakṣmī in Indian sculptural and numismatic art begins from about the first century B.C. We have seen that the goddess Śrī, as Lakṣmī, was unconnected with Viṣṇu in Vedic times. When exactly she came to be regarded as the consort of Viṣṇu cannot be definitely stated, but it is a fact that in the Gupta age this relation was firmly established. This goddess is called Sirimā Devatā in a Bharhut inscription of the Śuṅga period. We shall see in the next chapter that her popularity is indicated by her appearance on early Indian coins, such as the inscribed coins of Kausambī and Ujjayinī, the issues of some early kings of Ayodhyā and Mathurā, and those of the Satraps of Mathura and of Pantaleon, Agathokles, Maues and Azilises. The representation of Lakṣmī is found also on the coins of the imperial Guptas and some of their successors.

The Junagadh inscription of Skandagupta (fifth century A.D.) describes Viṣṇu, as the perpetual abode of the goddess Lakṣmī, who is represented as Vāsudeva's wife in the Sarnath inscription of Prakaṭāditya. In the Aphsad inscription of Ādityasena, Dāmodara is spoken of as the slayer of demons, and the feet of Mādhava, son of Vasudeva, as graced by the attentions of Śrī. A Kadamba inscription of A.D. 500 begins with a stanza in adoration of the *Bhagavat* with Śrī on the breast and Brahman on the lotus sprung from his navel. The Earth (Bhū), called Vaiṣṇavī in the *Mahābhārata* and many early epigraphic records, was conceived as a second wife of Viṣṇu. The early Cālukya emperors, styling themselves Śrī Pṛthivī-Valbabha (lord of Śrī and Pṛthivī), apparently claimed to be incarnations of Viṣṇu.[292] The opening verses of some Gaṅga charters are devoted to the adoration of Lakṣmī and her husband.[293] The relationship between Rājarāja and Rājasundarī has been compared to that between Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa.[294] The same thing is repeated while referring to Jākalladevī as the queen of Bhānudeva.[295] The association of Lakṣmī with Nārāyaṇa is alluded to in many Orissan inscriptions. The

Hindol plate of Subhākaradeva makes a reference to Lakṣmī adorning the lap of Viṣṇu.[296] The Anbil plates of Sundara Cola says that the splendour of the feet of Nārāyaṇa is doubled by their contact with the hands of Lakṣmī whose abode is the lotus.[297]

Lakṣmī, as we have seen above, was primarily an agricultural goddess developing out of a primitive fertility cult and that is why she is still worshipped with paddy corn and cowrie shells. Later on, she became the presiding deity of trade and commerce, and ultimately symbolized royal fortune. But the inscriptions bear no trace of her agrarian or commercial associations. She is just the symbol of wealth or Śrī, born of the ocean of milk, and bestower of all happiness, but not of *mokṣa*, which her co-wife Bhāratī or Sarasvatī, called *Yogi-vandya vibhava*[298] and *mokṣa-mahāphala-janani*[299] can give. In a few inscriptions, e.g., the Chastu inscription of Bālāditya,[300] Lakṣmī, as in the Kāvyas and Purāṇas, is a co-wife of Sarasvatī, jealously guarding her husband's attention. The Kurda inscription (972-73 A.D.) refers to Sarasvatī as one of the female trinity, others being Umā and Śrī.[301] The Maihar inscription of the middle of the tenth century A.D.[302] describes her as the goddess who is the divine power of the Lotus-born, who is Kamalā in Viṣṇu's embrace, who is the fair-complexioned one known throughout the world and worshipped as half the body of Girīśa. She is further described as throwing out the lunar orb from her toilette casket. Here her origin is said to be the lotus-like face of Brahman, on the stage of whose tongue, she dances, according to the Motupalli pillar inscription of 1244-45.[303] The Nagpur stone inscription of Vikarma 1161 refers to her as the bestower of learning, wisdom and poetical grace.[304] This inscription contains the expression Vāgdevyu in plural. According to Kielhorn, the expression refers to the two goddesses Sarasvatī and Durgā. But nowhere in literature do we find such duplication of the goddess of learning and the ascription of the qualities of Sarasvatī to Durgā does not appear to be traceable elsewhere.

The concept of the goddess as the spirit of learning is found in the Chebrolu inscription (A.D. 1213) of Jaya which invokes the goddess as the divine ambroisal flow of learning.[305] The Garavapadu grant of A.D. 1260 of Kākatīya Gaṇapatideva

also adores the goddess described as the 'flame called Sarasvatī.'[306] Her abode is said to be the minds of poets in a Jain inscription of A.D. 1230 in the temple of Neminātha on Mount Abu.[307] In the Rajahmundry Museum plates of Telugu-Coḷa Annadeva,[308] she is described as the idol of ecstasy, frequenting the paths of the heart of the world, delighting only in visiting clusters of lotuses, moist with tasting the sweet ambroisa flowing out of the moon. Her original character as the river goddess, connected with the energy of celestial waters, is echoed in a late inscription of A.D. 1354 in which she is eulogised as follows:

> May that Sarasvatī grant you all prosperity, who pleased with Śiva's, Viṣṇu's and Brahman's prayers, made (the volcanic) Aurva (fire), the (collective) energy, as it were, of all rivers, a captive, trembling in word-fetters in (the middle of) the ocean.[309]

Her relation with Nārāyaṇa has been admitted in the Khalari stone inscription of A.D. 1414[310] and also in the eulogy of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva Bālabalabhibhujaṅga in which she jealously taunts her husband for his dalliance with Lakṣmī.[311] The later Puranic tradition depicting Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī as the two daughters of Durgā is not echoed in inscriptions.[312]

The Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D. speaks of a worshipper of Viṣṇu building a temple full of Ḍākinīs in honour of the Divine Mother 'who utter tremendous shouts in joy and stir up the oceans, with the mighty wind rising from the magic rites of their religion.'[313] The *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*[314] refers to the worship of the Divine Mothers by the *Mātṛ-maṇḍala-vidaḥ* or *maṇḍala-krama-vidaḥ*. The first means 'those who know fully the circle of the "Divine-Mothers".' As to the second, the word *krama* means 'custom or rule sanctioned by tradition'. The word *maṇḍala* has different meanings—'the magic circle', 'group', etc. A passage, *Matṛṇām-loka-matṛṇām-maṇḍalam* occurs in a sixth century inscription from Udaygiri in Jhansi district, U.P. It records the construction of a temple of the Divine Mothers. The *Mātṛmaṇḍala* referred to in this inscription recalls the *Matṛgaṇa* or the 'group of Divine Mothers' mentioned in the records of the early Kadamba kings.[315] These rulers claimed to have been favoured by Kārttikeya and the Divine Mothers.

The early Cālukyas of Bādami are stated to have been nourished by the Seven Mothers described as *Sapta-loka-mātṛ*,[316] often interpreted as the 'Seven Mothers of Mankind' though its real meaning seems to be 'the Mothers of the seven Worlds'. The references in all these cases seem to be the collective worship of the Divine Mothers regarded as seven in number and probably known as the 'circle of Seven'. The Bihar stone pillars of Skandagupta mentions the Divine Mothers as the Mātṛs.[317] The Deogarh rock inscription of about the sixth century A.D. refers to another early temple of the Divine Mothers.

The popularity of the Mother Goddess in Western India during the post-Gupta age is indicated by a Bhilsa inscription of A.D. 878.[318] Gaurī is mentioned in the Sarnath stone inscription of Prakaṭāditya,[319] while the Mandasore stone pillar inscription[320] of Yośodharman records Kṣitidharatanayā which evidently refers to Umā or Pārvatī. The Khoh copper plate inscription of Saṃkṣobha[321] states that at the request of a certain person named Coḍugomin of the village of Opani, the king installed a temple for the goddess Piṣṭapurī and made an endowment for its maintenance. This goddess also occurs in two copper plates of Sarvanātha.[322] The Nāgarjuni Hill cave inscription of the Maukharī chief Anantavarman records the installation in the cave of an image representing Śiva in the form of Bhūtapati and his wife Pārvatī under the name of Devī. Another Nagarjuni Hill Cave inscription of the same king refers to the installation of an image of the goddess Pārvatī under the name of Kātyāyanī, and also the grant of a village to the same goddess under the name of Bhavānī. This inscription also stresses upon the Mahiṣamardinī form of the goddess.[323] A stanza in adoration of the same form of the goddess is found in the beginning of an inscription from the Bhramarāmātā temple near Choti Sadri, not far from the Neemuch station of the Ajmer-Khandwa railway line.[324] The epigraph records the construction and consecration of a temple of the Devī in A.D. 491. The Kalahandi copper plate grant of Tuṣṭikera[325] (fifth or sixth century A.D.) refers to the cult of Stambheśvarī, the family goddess of the Śulkis. The Nesari plates of the Rāṣṭrakūta Govinda III (A.D. 794-814) refer to the great veneration in which the goddess Tārā was held by the Pāla kings of eastern India. They show that the Pala standard

or banner bore the representation of Bhagavatī Tāṛā.[326] From the Banpur copper plates of the Somavaṃsī king Indraratha (first half of the eleventh century) it appears that the cult of Tārā was very popular in Orissa. A twelfth century Nālāndā inscription refers to the construction of a Tārā temple. A thirteenth century copper plate from Mainamati records the dedication of a Vihāra to Tārā in the town of Paṭṭikera. A grant of Vināyakapala, the Pratihāra king of Kanauj, dated A.D. 931, records that his predecessors Nāgabhaṭa, Bhoja and Mahendrapala where devout worshippers of Mother Goddess (*paramabhagavatībhakta*).[327] In numerous land grants of southern India, we come across names of various local goddesses and endowments made for their worship.

Notes

1. Max Ihm, Das Mütter-oder Matronenkultus und seine Denkmäler in *BJ*, LXXXIII, 1887, 1-200. An earlier work by J. de Wal, *De Moeder Goddinnen*, Leyden 1846 was superseded by Ihm's work.
2. Budge, *BD*, 59.
3. Wiedemann, *RAE*, 143.
4. Budge, *GE*, I. 450 ff.
5. Gordon, *UT*, 275, no. 2010.
6. *ABT*, 49 : I. 11-15, 34.
7. Crawley, *AP*, 65 ff.
8. *2 Kings*, XXIII. 4; *Jud.* II. 13; X. 6; *1 Sam.* VII. 4. XII. 10.
9. *De Dea Syria*, 10 ff.
10. Strong and Garstang, *SG*, 41 ff.
11. James. *CMG*, 186.
12. *Ibid.*, 184.
13. Macalister, *G*, II. 419 ff.
14. Albright, *ARI*, 114.
15. Rowe, *BS*, pl. 48.
16. Farnell, *CGS*, I, 179 ff.
17. Nilsson, *MMR*, 487 ff.
18. 200-264.
19. Herodotus, I. 105; Pausanias 1. 14.7; *Iliad*, V. 330; *Odyssey*, VIII. 362 f; *Theogony*, 192.
20. Tacitus, *Annales*, IV. 43.
21. Livy, XXII. 9.7.
22. Suetonius, *Julius*, 6; Valleius Paterculus, *Annales*, II. 41.
23. Nilsson, *MMR*, 503 ff.
24. Licht, *SLAG*, 194 ff.

25. Harrison, *PSGR*, 497.
26. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 134 ff.
27. Garstang, *LH*, 211 ff; Gurney, *H*, 139 ff; Laroche in *JCS*, I. 96.
28. Livy, VIII. 9.6; X. 19; Ovid. *Fasti*, VI.201.
29. Chatterji in *MR*, 1924, 679; Raychaudhuri, *SIA*, 200-04.
30. Harrison, *T*, 54, 164; *PSGR*, 456.
31. Pausanias, VII. 17. 10-12.
32. Livy XXIX. 10-11; Ovid, *Fasti*, IV. 25 ff; XVIII. 16.
33. XXIX. 14.
34. Kramer, *SM*, 56 ff.
35. Mackenzie, *MBA*, 277.
36. James, *CMG*, 233, 237.
37. *Yast* V, *Vendidad*, VII. 16; *SBE*, XXIII, 52 ff.
38. Ghrishman, *I*, Pl. VIII.
39. Strabo, XI, 532; XII. 537, 559; XV. 733.
40. Pope, *SPA*, IV, Pl. 160. b.
41. E.g., VIII. 19.14. For Aditi see Macdonell, *VM*, 120-23; Muir, *OST*, V. 36.
42. VIII. 25.3; X. 36.3; X. 132.6.
43. VIII. 47.9.
44. II. 27. 7; III. 4. 11; VIII. 56. 11.
45. II. 40. 6; VII. 40.4.
46. V. 46.6.
47. VIII. 67.12.
48. I. 136.3.
49. IV. 55.3; VIII. 27.5.
50. I.24. 15; I. 94.15; I.162.22; II.27.14; III. 54.10; IV. 12. 4; IV. 54.3; V. 82.6; VII. 87.7; VII. 93.7; X. 35.2-3; X. 87.18.

50a. *TR*, I.230.

50b. *IN*, 150 f.

51. II. 17.1; VII. 85.4.
52. I.50. 12; II. 27.1; VIII. 18.3; IX. 72.8-9; *AV*, VII. 2.15; IX. 1.4; XIII. 2.9; *Taitt. Br.* I. 1.9.1; *Śat. Br.*, III. 1.3.3; VI. 1.2.8; XI. 6.3.8; etc.
53. V. 31.5; VIII. 12.14.
54. *Nir.* XI. 23.
55. Cf. II. 27.1.
56. *Śat. Br.* II. 4.4.2; etc.
57. III. 8.3; XI. 1.11.
58. VII. 6.2.
59. XXI. 5.
60. XXIX. 60.
61. VII. 5.14.
62. XIII. 1.38.
63. XIII. 43, 49.
64. *AV*, XV. 18.4; XVI. 6.7; *Vāj. Saṃ.* XVIII. 22.
65. VII. 7.1.
66. Macdonell, VM, 123; Muir, *OST*, V. 42.
67. I. 92.4; VI 64.2.

68. I. 23.11.
69. I. 24.3-4.
70. V. 80.5-6.
71. I. 48.5-10; I.49.3.
72. I. 92.9; VII. 77.1.
73. VII. 79.1.
74. VII. 80.1-2.
75. VIII. 47.14.
76. I. 113.14; VI. 64.3; VI. 65.2.
77. I. 123.4-6.
78. I. 48.15; I. 113.4.
79. I. 113.9.
80. I. 23.7; I. 48.10; I. 49.2; III. 61.2; VII. 78.1-4.
81. III. 61.2; IV. 51.3; V. 79.1-10, VII. 75.6.
82. IV. 5.13; VII. 75.3.
83. I. 23.5.
84. I. 123.5.
85. I. 30.22.
86. I. 24.1,11, I.113.9.
87. I. 69.1; VII. 10.1; X. 3.3.
88. I. 44.2; I. 183.2; IV. 52.2-3.
89. I. 30.22; I. 48; I. 113.9; V. 79.6.
90. The 20 complete hymns in which she is invoked are I. 48-49; I. 113; I. 123-24; III.61; IV. 51-52; V. 79-80; VI. 64-65; VII. 75-81; VIII. 172.
91. Muir's tr.
92. *JBBRAS*, XXVII. 19 ff.
93. IV. 30.12-15, 20-22.
94. I. 113.19.
95. II. 15.6; X. 73.6; X. 138.5.
96. V. 84.
97. XII. 1.
98. I. 53.3; 159.2; III.3.11; VII. 53.2.; IX. 85.12; X. 1.7; 35.3; 64.14; 65.8; 110-9.
99. I. 89.4; 90.7; 159.2; 160.2; 185.11; IV. 1.10; V. 42.16; 43.3; VI. 70.6; 72.6; VIII. 97.2; X. 53.3; 88.15; also *AV*, II. 28.4; III. 23.6; VI. 4.3; 120.2; VIII. 7.2; XII. 1.10; *VS*. XIX. 47.
100. X. 18.10.
101. VII. 1.5.
102. I. 1.3.5.
103. Macdonell , VM, 88; Muir, *OST* V. 21-22.
104. III. 54.13; X. 131.5; etc.
105. *Śat. Br*. III. 9.1.7; *Ait. Br*., III. 1.10.
106. XIX. 12.
107. VII. 47; VII. 49; X. 9; X. 30.
108. X. 91.6; *AV*, I. 31.1.
109. I. 23.16; X. 9.2; X. 17.10; X. 30.10; etc.
110. I. 22.12; II. 32.8; X. 86.11-12; *Śat. Br*., XIV. 2.1-8.
111. II. 22.

112. I. 22.12; II. 32.8; V. 46.8; VI. 50-51; VI. 66.6; VII. 34.22; cf. *Nir*. IX. 33; XI. 50; XII. 46.
113. X. 127.
114. X. 125.
115. VIII. 89.10-11.
116. X. 64.10.
117. II. 31.4; V. 41.19.
118. V. 42.12.
119. II. 32.4-8; V. 42.12.
120. II. 32.6; X. 184.2.
121. II. 32.8.
122. I. 84.10-11; VIII. 6.19, etc.
123. X. 17.2.
124. I. 119.5; IV. 43.6; VII. 63.3; X. 85.
125. X. 146; *Nir*. IX. 29-30.
126. X. 71.2.
127. I. 151; *Nir*. IX. 1.
128. X. 1.4; X. 97; X. 145.
129. X. 10. 4; X. 11.2.
130. X. 108.
131. X. 11.2.
132. X. 155.
133. X. 59.56.
134. X. 101.22.
135. Cf. *Śat. Br*. I. 9.2.11.
136. VIII. 46.3.
137. I. 8.1.8; XI. 5.3.5.
138. I. 8.1.27; XIV. 9.4.27; Cf. *Āśv. S.S*., I. 7.7.
139. V. 5.
140. Cf. *Nir*. XI. 27.
141. *Ait. Br*. I. 27.
142. II. 2.4.1.
143. VII. 5.5.52.
144. II. 8.8.4.
145. XII. 5; XXVII. 1.
146. XX. 14.2.
147. III. 57.
148. I. 6.10.4-5.
149. X. 18.
150. X. 1.7.
151. III. 25.
152. I. 2.4.
153. II. 15.14.
154. This Section is mainly based on Hopkins, *EM*.
155. *Mbh*. I. 65. 11; III. 134.19; etc.
156. IX. 45.13.
157. II. 92.21.
158 IV. 1.120.

159. III. 14.14.
160. LVIII.
161. *Mbh*. V. 48.80 f.
162. III. 272.31.
163. *Mbh*., 1. 49.9; VII. 69.20; etc.
164. III. 200.41; Cf. *Rām* V. 40.2.
165. III. 142.45.
166. V. 124.28.
167. VII. 53.4 f.
168. I. 203.34.
169. XII. 228.2 f.
170. I. 77.30; II. 70.72; 79.15; VI. 111. 89; 113.21; VII. 9.9; 47.9.
171. I. 61.44; I. 67.156.
172. I. 66.50.
173. III. 94. 9 f.
174. II. 18.2; XII. 343. 75; XIII. 155.2.
175. XII. 240.8.
176. XIII. 31.6.
177. II. 49.26.
178. V. 117.14.
179. III. 110.26.
180. III. 200.83; XII. 35, 37.
181. III. 12.17 f.
182. VIII. 34.32.
183. I. 112.10; III. 291.40; etc.
184. XII. 343.46-50.
185. I. 66.52.
186. I. 66.53 f; XII. 122.46.
187. X. 8.70.
188. II. 118.28; V. 16.16.
189. V. 22.39 f.
190. Cf. *Taitt. Br*., II. 3.10.1; *Pār. G.S*., II. 17.9, 13.
191. VII. 17.35.
192. VI. 75.35 f.
193. I. 65.42 f., 67.3 f., 84.
194. XIII. 155.12.
195. I. 199.6.
196. I. 63.35 f.
197. V. 98.12.
198. III. 68.12; Cf. *Rām*, V. 15.29.
199. XIII. 146.4 f.
200. IX. 46.38.
201. IX. 35.45.
202. XII. 207.19-20.
203. III. 14.
204. I. 66.23 f.
205. III. 12.20.
206. XII. 37.12.

207. IX. 46.98 f.
208. III. 232.6.
209. I. 37.28.
210. IX. 43-46.
211. III. 226.26
212. IV. 6; VI. 23.
213. I. 36.21; III. 16.43.; VI. 60.11; etc.
214. III. 231.49; VII. 80.40; IX. 45.53; X. 7.46; etc.
215. I. 215.21; III. 38.32.
216. III. 38-40.
217. II. 10-11.
218. III. 271-272.
219. VI. 23.
220. XIII. 140-48.
221. I. 35.19-23.
222. VII. 4.28-31.
223. VII. 42.30.
224. I. 18.12; II. 15.22; 25.35; 93.22; IV. 1.119; VII. 11-14-16.
225. LVIII, CLXXVII.
226. For their iconographical descriptions see Bhattacharya, *II*, 120-47, 163-77, 180-84.
227. PTS (ed), III. 443.
228. *Ibid.*, III. 257, 262, 306, IV. 281-82.
229. *Ibid.*, V. 146.
230. I. 17; II. 17.
231. LXXII. 101, 112; LXXVI. 233.
232. For the iconology of these goddesses see Bhattacharyya *IBI*.
233. Schoff, *PES*, 46.
234. *Perumbaṇārruppaḍai*, 457 ff.
235. *Tirumurugāṛṛuppadai*, 258 ff.
236. *IHQ*, II. 621-22.
237. XI-XII.
238. XII. 22-29.
239. XX. 37-40; XIII. 113-25.
240. LXXXIX. 8.
241. CCXVIII. 1.
242. *JMU*, XXXII, 152.
243. VI-X.
244. XIII-XIV.
245. Cf. *Ahananūru*, 345.3-7.
246. XXX. 38-47.
247. XIII. 12-15.
248. Pargiter's tr.
249. Cf. *Vāmana*, LVI. 67-70.
250. *Mālati M*, V; *Matsya* CCLXI. 33-37; *Varāha* XCVI.
251. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, III. 394-431.
252. XIII. 32 ff.
253. V. 2.84.

254. *Matsya*, CLXXIX : *Devi M*, VIII. 12-21.
255. XVII. 33-37.
256. *Matsya*, CCLXI. 24-32; *Agni*, L. 19-24; *Vāmana*, LVI, *Varāha*, XCVI; etc.
257. Cf. *Skanda*, Aruṇa, Pūrva XI; Uttara XIX; Setu VI-VII; Nāgara CXX-CXXI; *Vāmana* XVII-XX; *Varāha* XCII-XCV.
258. *Vāmana*, LV-LVI; *Śiva*, Vāyavīya XXI.
259. *Varāha*, XXVIII, XCVI.
260. XIII. 26-53.
261. Āvantya/Revā, XCVIII. 64-92.
262. Sṛṣṭi, XVII. 184-211.
263. VII. 30. 55-83.
264. I. 12.
265. I. 8.
266. II-XX.
267. XXXIX, LXXXIII-LXXXVI.
268. LX.
269. V. 2-18, 21-31; VII. 28, X. 13.
270. LII. 16.
271. L. 3-6.
272. L. 14.
273. LII. 15.
274. CCLX. 11 ff.
275. *PBDFV*, 161-62.
276. Canto X.
277. V. 24.
278. IV. 27-33.
279. XI. 15.
280. VII. 39.
281. Gray's tr. 97.
282. Act V.
283. I. 18.15 ff.
284. LXI. 17 ff,
285. I. 36 ff.
286. I. 26.
287. V. 28.
288. Beal, *LHT*, 86.
289. I. 133 ff., II. 170 ff.
290. II. 25.
291. XXV. 29-31.
292. Sircar, *RLAMI*, 49.
293. *EI*. XXVIII. 249.
294. *Ibid*., 251.
295. *Ibid*., XXXI. 124.
296. Misra, *OBK*, 16.
297. *EI*, XV, 58.
298. *Ibid*., XXVI. 41.
299. *IA*. XVII. 228.

300. *EI*, XII. 13.
301. *IA*, XII. 264.
302. *EI*, XXXV. 174-75.
303. *EI*, XII. 190.
304. *Ibid.*, II. 182.
305. *Ibid.*, V. 144.
306. *Ibid.*, XVIII. 350.
307. *Ibid.*, VIII. 21.
308. *Ibid.*, XXVI. 41.
309. *IA*, XI. 102.
310. *EI*. II. 230.
311. *Ibid.*, VI. 205.
312. See Mukhopadhyay in *FILS*, 106-11.
313. *CII*, III. 72.
314. LX. 9.
315. *IA*, VI. 27.
316. *Ibid.*, VII. 74, 164; XIII. 138.
317. *CII*, III. 49.
318. *EI*, XXX. 213.
319. *CII*, III. 286.
320. *Ibid.*, 142, 150.; *IA*, XVIII. 219; XX. 188.
321. *CII*, III. 112.
322. *Ibid.*, 132, 138.
323. *Ibid.*, 225-28.
324. *EI*, XXX. 120 ff.
325. *Ibid.*, 274-78, *JKHRS*, II, 107-10.
326. *Ibid.*, XXXIV. 137.
327. *IA*, XV, 140-41.

Mother Goddesses in Archaeology

THE EARLIEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SPECIMENS

It is from Western Asia, the South Russian plain and the valley of the Don that we come across the earliest representations of the Palaeolithic Mother Goddess in bone, ivory and stone. These female figurines, with prominent maternal organs are commonly called 'Venuses'. They have been found at Kostienki, Gagarino, Mezine and especially at Malta near Lake Baikal in Siberia. In Central and Western Europe, similar figurines are also found in which sexual features are conspicuously indicated. The well-known examples are the Venuses of Willendorf, Lespugne, Laugerie-Basse, Wisternitz, Sireuil, Mentone, etc. In the Willendorf Venus, the arms are slightly indicated, but the abdomen is prominent and the buttocks are strongly developed. The ivory Venus of Lespugne has huge breasts and a sort of loin cloth around the waist. Apart from these Venuses, we have a few Palaeolithic figures of nude pregnant women of some magico-religious significance, like the Laussel woman carved in relief on a block of stone in a rock-shelter near Les Eyzies in the Dordogne.[1]

The Neolithic and the earlier Chalcholithic figurines of the Mother Goddess have been found at Alishar Hüyük and Yümük Tepe in Anatolia, at Anau in Russian Turkestan, at Arpachiyah, Hassuna, Gawra, Halaf, Brak, Abu Shahrain, Warka, Asmar and other archaeological sites in the Mesopotamian region and at Giyan and Susa in Iran. These figurines in general have pronounced sexual characteristics. In some of the Anau figurines the sex organ is emphasised by punch-marks.

The Arpachiyah figurines of Northern Iraq, characterized by pendulous breasts, prominent navel, slender waist and heavy buttocks, have some features in common with those of the aforesaid Venus type. Most of them are represented in a squatting posture suggestive of childbirth. As in the Palaeolithic Venuses, the head seldom is shown. The Tell Hassuna figurines resemble those found at Arpachiyah. In the post-Hassuna levels the goddesses reappear, and in the Halaf deposits they become prevalent everywhere from the Syrian coast to the Zagros mountains where the Halaf culture flourished. At Tepe Gawra the figurines are of various types. In some cases the heads are merely pinched out of the clay, but the facial features, especially the eyes, are painted. A highly conventionalized type is also found with prominent breasts and emphasized sexual triangle marked by incised lines below the navel. Some are armless, without pointed knees, having prominent breasts and a painted skirt suspended from the shoulders by two straps between the breasts. At Ur the figurines are characterized by elongated grotesque heads. Often the bodies are modelled with feet together and hands at the waist, or holding a child to the breast, or sometimes resting on the hips. Bands and stripes are painted on the nude body for ornamentation. Statuettes from Warka resemble those of Ur in form and ornamentation. Clay figurines in Jemdet Nasr layers and from Tell Asmar have prominent facial representation and emphasis on sexual features. The nude figurines from Tepe Giyan in Iran have painted hair and eyes but there is not so much stress on the maternal organs. The Susa figurines represent a variety of types.[2]

Nothing specific can be said about the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Mother Goddess of India, simply because the data are much too meagre. In the Punjab and its adjoining regions, Palaeolithic assemblages of implements characteristic of both the chopper-chopping tool and the hand axe-Levallios flake complexes are found. The former, called the Sohanian or Soan, has been reported from five successive horizons, each of which yields pebble tools associated with flake implements. Massive and crude in the earliest phases of the Sohanian, these reveal a progressive refinement in the younger horizons. In part contemporary with the Early Sohanian is a series of hand axes

of Abbevilleo-Acheulian affinities which occur in profusion at many sites in India from the Gujarat region in the north to Madras in the south. Traces of the transitional Mesolithic cultures (a term not now in fashion) are noticed in many districts of South India and in various sites of Gujarat and Punjab. Excavations at Gujarat have yielded a number of human skeletons, the crouching posture in which they have been found leaves no doubt that they were deliberately buried, with a definite idea of orientation. The Neolithic cultures of India, though not correspond to a fixed period of time, are so far indicated by the stone tools bearing unmistakable signs of polish found in several districts of South India and also in different areas of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Kashmir, West Bengal, South-Eastern Bihar and Orissa. The Bronze age was initiated in the alluvial valleys of the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates and the Indus with the transformation of some riverside villages into cities. It is now known that village communities existed in the Indus Valley as early as the fourth millennium B.C. The original complexion of their assemblages resembled those of Iran (and perhaps those of the Ubaidian imprint on South-Western Iran), but the complexion gradually changed to something characteristic of the Indus valley itself and evidently culminated in the Harappan urban civilization.[3]

The connection between the growth of agriculture and the origin of the village communities, as we have seen, accounts for the popularity of the goddess cult. The Zhob and Kulli sites, in Northern and Southern Baluchistan, have furnished a fair number of terracotta figurines. It is in these figurines that we recognize the earliest embodiment of the primitive Mother Goddess in the Indian context. The figurines of the Kulli culture finish at the waist in a splayed pedestal, arms bent with hands on the hips, breasts usually shown, eyes fashioned from small stones, hair elaborately dressed, ornamented by oval pendants resembling cowrie shells, and bangles on arms and wrists. In the cultures to the north and north-east of Quetta grouped round the Zhob river, a number of identical terracotta figurines have been found in the sites of Dabar-Kot, Periano Ghundai, Sur-Jangal and Mogul Ghundai. They are of the Kulli type, with necklaces, large and beak-like noses, hooded heads, exaggerated breasts, circular eye-holes

and slit mouths. That they had a fertility significance is shown by the representation of the cowrie shells and by that of a phallus carved in stone at the mound of Moghul Ghundai near the left bank of the Zhob river and at the neighbouring mound of Periano Ghundai on the right bank of the river where a *yoni* is depicted with great prominence.[1]

THE HARAPPAN GODDESS AND HER WESTERN COUNTERPARTS

To some extent, the Zhob and Kulli cultures appear to coincide with each other in certain phases of development and to overlap in their latest phases with the Harappan culture of the Indus valley. The Harappan culture indicates revolutionary change from the isolated peasant communities to the large and highly organised urban settlements. Remains of the Harappan settlements stretch from the Makran coast to Kathiawar and northwards to the Himalayan foothills, and what impresses the observer is the complete uniformity among the objects found in this vast area which implies the existence of a strong and centralized authority regulating the life and activities of the people over this extensive region. The cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro sheltered a mixed population, the major section of which came from the adjacent villages to seek their fortune in the great cities. They also brought with them their own cults and rituals, the Female Principle of the agricultural communities, which formed the basis of Harappan religion. Some of the cults and rituals of the simpler peoples were adopted by the higher, but not probably in the original unsophisticated form. They were given an aristocratic colour, which is evident from the contrast presented by the two traditions of plastic art, one in terracotta and the other in stone and bronze. The former represents a popular plastic idiom of the simpler people, perhaps following the terracotta tradition of the peasant cultures of Kulli and Zhob, while the stone and bronze sculptures represent an art of the higher section of the people, already sophisticated because of their elevated position in the society.

The distinction in the art idioms was, in all probability.

due to class distinctions which appear to have emerged as a result of the predominant commercial economy that provided the mainstay of this civilisation.[5]

The Mother Goddesses of Harappa and Mohenjodaro are significantly nude save for a very short skirt round the waist secured by a girdle. The figurines, as a rule, are burdened with jewellery consisting of elaborate neck collars, long chains, armlets, bangles, anklets, ear-rings, etc. The Harappan figurines do not represent mere busts, as the Kulli and Zhob figurines do, but they are modelled with legs and hands, showing a variety of positions. The goddesses wear a distinctive head-dress which rises from the back of the head, in some cases directly from the head, while in others it forms part of the coiffure. Black stains on the pannier-like side projections of the head-dress were probably produced from smoke caused by lamp-offerings to the goddess. A similar head-dress is found in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean region. Certain prehistoric figures of Mother Goddess from Adalia in Asia Minor wear something similar to the fan-shaped portion of the mentioned head-dress. Reference may also be made in this connection to a figurine of the Semitic Mother Goddess Astarte, the great goddess of vegetation and fertility, whose head-dress bears a resemblance to that of the figurines from Mohenjodaro. Many of the Mother Goddess figurines from Mohenjodaro are painted with a red slip or wash, as in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Malta, but those from Harappa retain no trace of paint.[6] The finds of the southern Sind along the Indus include terracotta figurines exactly like the specimens from Harappa and Mohenjodaro.[7] The figurines of the Mother Goddess from Chanhudaro are also of the Mohenjodaro type, the only difference being that they stand upon a flat, more or less open base which recall the figurines from the pre-Harappan sites of Northern and Southern Baluchistan.

Marshall stressed upon a common cultural bond between the Indus Valley and the West. What the exact nature of this cultural bond was is not very clearly known to us, but it may be inferred that, religiously, these civilizations had something in common. The Sumerian Mother Goddess whose qualities were later absorbed by Nana of Uruk, Nina of Ninevch,

Inanna of Erech, Bau of Lagash, Ninlil of Nippur, Annuit of Akkad, Zarpaint of Babylon, etc., belonged to the same category of the Harappan *Magna Mater* whose attributes were also specialized by various goddesses of the historic age. Some of the aforesaid deities had evidently an eastward migration in subsequent ages. The goddess Inanna, also known as Nana, Nanai, etc., who was supposed to be the mother of Attis and identified with Ishtar, Astarte, Artemis, Anaitis and Aphrodite, was able to extend her cult into India through the Scythians and Kuṣāṇas in later times. Examples are the Naina Devī of the Kulu valley, Sirmur and Bilaspur, Bibi Nāni of Baluchistan, Naini Devī of Nainital, etc. Goddesses of the Ishtar group (Ishtar, Astarte, Astaroth, Atargatis, etc.) might also have contributed something to the later Tantric conception of Tārā, as is indicated by the similarity of their names.

Commenting on the Mother Goddess figurines from Mohenjodaro and Harappa Marshall says:

> Now it is well known that female statuettes akin to those from the Indus Valley and Baluchistan have been found in large numbers and over a wide range of countries between Persia and the Aegean, notably in Elam, Mesopotamia, Transcaspia, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine, Cyprus, Crete, the Cyclades, the Balkans and Egypt.[8]

In the Nile Valley, small figures of women have been found in graves of the Badarian age. They fall into the line with those of the Venus tradition and are also combined with a slim variety as elsewhere. Petrie links them with the Palaeolithic Brassempouy examples. They are almost all from the early period, and do not recur until protodynastic times when they are plentiful in Hierakonpolis and Abydos. In Cyprus, fiddle-shaped squatting figurines in stone have been found in the Chalcolithic site at Khirokitia. Sexual symbols are not very prominent in these figurines. The Erimi culture of the same region, however, yields female terracotta statuettes, sometimes with painted ornamentations, in which the genitalia are pronounced. The Cycladic sites yield crude figurines of the goddess in most of which the sexual triangle is invariably represented. The majority of the Thessalian terracotta examples

are female and fragmentary. Those belonging to the Neolithic period are either standing steatopygous figures with long necks and hands touching the breasts, or seated with the thighs and buttocks rather less highly developed, and the hands sometimes placed on the knees. They are well-made and polished. The terracotta figurines recovered from the site of Dimini, which flourished from the second to the fourth Thessalian prehistoric periods are inferior in technique to those from Sesklo, Tsangli and other deposits where the first period was represented.[9]

It is in Minoan Crete, in the earliest Neolithic stratum at Knossos, that we come across all the principal types of clay figurines of the Mother Goddess which are noticed in the figurines from South-Eastern Europe, the Aegean basin, Anatolia and Western Asia. The majority of the Cretan images, however, belong to the squatting and sitting varieties. It is in Minoan Crete that we find a differentiation in the attributes of the Mother Goddess, each of which has been deified in the form of individual goddesses. The Minoan goddess is thus depicted in clay and porcelain as the Earth-Mother, Mountain-Mother, Mistress of trees, Lady of wild beasts and so on. Sometimes she is accompanied by a priestess, together with the double axe, horns of consecration and votive garments. Often she is represented on seals and signets as seated beneath a tree and receiving offerings, or as the hunting goddess accompanied by lions with a spear in her hand.[10]

Of the Maltese Mother Goddesses, reference may be made to an obese female statue of the Western Asiatic type found in the main court of the temple at Hal Tarxien. Over seven feet high and arrayed in a fluted skirt, it resembles the naked steatopygous headless figurines found in considerable numbers at Hagar Qim and at the great rock-cut Hypogeum at Hal Safliani. The Maltese cult connections were mainly with Western Asia. There are also indications of Neolithic Cretan, Cycladic, and Siculan influences. Almeria in the Iberian Peninsula has yielded numerous Mother Goddess figurines, of the Aegean type, many of which have been recovered from the megalithic tombs at huts as Los Millares on the Andarax river. The Aegean types of stone figurines, with some modifications, recur in the collective tombs on the plateau of Granada. The cult seems to have

spread over the peninsula from El Garcel near the Mediterranean coast of South-East Spain. Of other Iberian sites of the Mother Goddess cult, mention may be made of Catalonia, Alemtejo and Palmella in Portugal, El Castillo near Pavia and so on. In North-West Europe, the centre of the cult was the Seine and Oise valleys. The Neolithic sites of Britain have also revealed numerous archaeological specimens of the Mother Goddess cult.[11]

THE VEDIC AND POST-VEDIC CULTS

There was evidently a Vedic age in Indian History which was characterized by a special type of civilization that flourished in North-Western and Northern India and extended its influence over other regions after the fall of the Harappan civilization. On the basis of the internal evidence of the Vedic texts it may be assumed that a civilization mainly based on pastoral economy, patriarchal social organisation, nature-gods and sacrificial cults vigorously existed in the Indus and Gangetic region from c. 12th century B.C. onwards, although this civilization could not retain its original character for a long time. A critical examination of the Vedic texts reveals the existence of a number of material cultures of different grades under a common tradition and ideology. Unfortunately, we have no archaeological evidence regarding the existence of Vedic civilization, although attempts have been made, with little or no success, to connect the post-Harappan archaeological findings, especially those of the Painted Grey Ware cultures, with different aspects of Vedic civilization.

The Vedic sacrificial cults had nothing to do with image worship. Also there was no question of image worship in early Buddhism and Jainism. This does not, however, imply that the iconic cults of the pre-Vedic period were completely stamped out. The older cults still survived as the suppressed religion of the masses, and some of the deities of the non-Vedic stream were able to make their way into the later Vedic pantheon, especially the Mother Goddesses like Ambikā, Umā, Kātyāyanī, Durgā, etc. Of the surviving images of the post-Harappan period we may refer to a headless Mother Goddess from

Inamgaon near Poona which has been assigned to c. 1200 B.C.[12] Her association with a bull as vehicle reminds us of the images of the Nude Goddess with a bull at Vadgaon in Maharashtra and Bhinmal in Southern Rajasthan in the historical period. A small gold tablet, representing a naked woman standing on her leg in symmetrical rigidity, with exaggerated hips and sexual organs, heavy and clumsy ornaments and in a rigidly angular composition, was dug out near Lauriya Nandangarh. This 'little plaque supposed to represent Pṛthivī, found in a burial mound, regarded as Vedic',[13] was identified by Bloch as the iconic representation of the Earth Goddess and was ascribed by him to about the 8th or 7th century B.C.[14] But its Vedic character is doubtful.

According to Rowland, some of the terracotta figurines of the Mother Goddess of pre-Maurya date are closely related stylistically and iconographically to the gold plaque from Lauriya, having the same flatness and frontality and the same emphatic display of the attributes of fecundity—the heavy breasts and the enormously exaggerated sexual organ—characteristic of the Mother Goddess found all over the ancient Near East.[15] A small gold tablet, similar to that found at Lauriya and a small gold figure, forming part of the relics from the ruins of Piprahwa Stūpa and belonging to a period not earlier than the Mauryas, and also some of the oldest terracotta pieces recovered by Marshall from the ruins of Bhita prove the continuity of the cult of the Female Principle.[16] The female deity of the Lauriya-Piprahwa type is seen on the ring stones which have been found at Rupar, Taxila, Purana Qila (Indraprastha), Bhita, Kara, Kausambi, Jhusi, Rajghat, Mathura, Sankisa, Vaisali and Patna. These figures have broad hips and an exposed sexual triangle and can be assigned to the Maurya-Suṅga period. Another variety of this goddess, completely nude and legs wide apart in a frog posture have been observed at Bhita, Jhusi and Kausambi in Uttar Pradesh, Ter and Nevasa in Maharashtra and Nagarjunikonda in Andhra Pradesh, as we shall presently see.[17]

The pre-Maurya terracotta Mother Goddess figurines are not rare. But they are not abundant as well. A female figurine from Buxar in Sahabad district, found from the pre-NBP and pre-coin level of period I, having a round face, incised wide

eyes, punched ear-lobes, prominent breasts and perforations over the head, evidently stands for the Mother Goddess.[18] The Patna Museum contains a few other terracottas from Buxar, Kumrahar and Kausambi which may be connected with the popular conception of the pre-Maurya Mother Goddess.[19] All these terracotta figurines are hand-made. From Pāṭaliputra (Patna), Vaiśālī (Basarh in Muzaffarpur district), Champā near Bhagalpur), Chirand in Saran district and Sonpur in Gaya district we have pre-Maurya terracotta figurines of the Nagas, both male and female, suggestive of a popular cult which stood in an undifferentiated religious complex with that of the Mother Goddess.

MAURYA AND POST-MAURYA

The lists of existing religious sects and cults as found in the Buddhist *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (3rd-2nd centuries B.C.) and in the *Mahāniddesa* and *Cullaniddesa* (2nd-1st centuries B.C.) demonstrate the existence of a bewildering variety of primitive faiths and cults, one of the important features of which was the cult of the Yakṣas, besides that of the Nāgas. The Yakṣas and Yakṣiṇīs were agricultural deities of primitive tribal conception and were worshipped in every village. Later they held a very important place in Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical myths, legends and religions. The Yakṣas and Yakṣiṇīs were conceived as having a physical form of large proportions and huge bulk, and since they owed their existence to primitive tribal imagination, they had a heavy earthly character of form, as is found in their sculptural representations assigned to the beginning of the Christian era. A study of the extant Yakṣa and Yakṣiṇī images shows that the later images of the gods and goddesses were shaped after them.

Of the earliest Yakṣiṇī sculptures influencing the iconographic conceptions of the Female Principle of contemporary and later religious systems, mention must be made of the Alakamandā and Sudarśanā Yakṣiṇīs of Bharhut and also to their Buddhistic partners, Sirimā Devatā and Culakokā Devatā, belonging to the first century B.C. There are many more figures on the Bharhut railing, but on account of the absence of

accompanying labels in all the cases, they cannot be distinguished properly. Sudarśanā stands on a *makara*, her right hand showing the *tarjanī-mudrā* and the left the *Kaṭihasta* pose. Alakamandā is a heavily jewelled standing figure whose feet rest on the upraised hands of a leaf-clad male figure whose right hand holds an object probably symbolizing the treasures (*nidhis*) of Kubera. Another Yakṣiṇī, Candrā, stands on a horse-faced *makara*, her right hand holding the branch of a tree, the trunk of which is entwined by her left hand. Culakoka (Kṣudrakokā) and Mahākokā stand on much the same posture, the mount of the former a lively tusker, the latter having no mount at all.[20] Sirimā Devatā was adopted by the Buddhists from the Brahmanical Śrī or Lakṣmī whose images have been found at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodh Gaya, Kausambi, Pitalkhora and many other places. A unique representation of a *śālabhañjikā* or a woman performing a vegetation rite is seen on a railing pillar at Bodh Gaya. Pāṇini informs us that the *śālabhañjikā* was peculiar to the eastern people which is substantiated by the evidence of the Buddhist literature. Of other Yakṣiṇī figures, mention must be made of two well-known specimens from Besnagar and Didarganj. The Besnagar Yakṣiṇī, which is now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, is characterized by the linear rhythm and the feeling for human form which are far in advance than of Bharhut. It belongs to c. 50 B.C. The Didarganj Yakṣiṇī, which is now in the Patna Museum, is the best of all the known Yakṣiṇī images from the artistic point of view. It is not very much earlier than the first century A.D.

Many terracotta figurines of the Maurya and Śuṅga period have been found, some of which undoubtedly stand for the Yakṣiṇī type. One of them, originally found at Tamluk in West Bengal and now in the Kensington Museum, London, deserves special mention. It is burdened with ornaments and its coiffure contains the artistic use of some miniature weapons. The cult of such female deities having five or three *āyudhas* (weapons) in the elaborate head-dress was prevalent in various parts of India from Punjab to Bengal in the Śuṅga period as is proved by the abundance of terracotta figurines from Rupar, Sankisa, Ahicchatra, Angaikheda, Mathura, Kausambi, Rajghat, Chandraketugarh, Harinarayanpur and numerous other sites. A large number of terracotta Mother Goddess images

have been recovered from Mathura along with Northern Black Polished Ware and coins in the early and middle phases of period II.[21] They represent a fat steatopygous female with prominent breasts, an applique necklace and girdle and a well-marked navel. Analogous figurines have been discovered in Ahicchatra, Hastinapur, Saraimohana and Masaon near Varanasi, Kausambi and Vaiśālī. From Charsada (the site of ancient Puṣkalāvatī) typical Mother-Goddess figurines in terra-cotta have been found from the levels dated between c. 250 and 100 B.C. These are with small breasts, applique eyes resembling inverted shells and without a navel. Terracotta figurines, showing a nude goddess sitting with legs apart, and showing some foreign influence, are found at Ter, Nevasa, Yellesvaram, Nagarjunikonda and a few other Deccan sites. They belong to the Sātavāhana period. The cult of a nude goddess having Roman-Egyptian influence, and belonging to the Kuṣāṇa age, is represented in terracotta plaques from Bhita, Kausambi and Jhusi. Parthian influence is also seen in the terracotta votive tanks enshrining a Mother Goddess surrounded by birds and musicians. These votive tanks have been found from various sites such as Ahicchatra, Hastinapur, Sirkap, etc.[22]

In some early coins, sculptures and relief carvings we have representations of Gajalakṣmī, the goddess of wealth being anointed with water by two elephants standing on her either side. Four such representations are met with at Bharhut. A Gajalakṣmī representation occurs in the doorway of Ananta-gumpha, an Orissan cave, which belongs to a period not earlier than the first century B.C. Ḷakṣmī in the sense of plenty occurs in the *Ṛgveda*, while in the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, Lakṣmī and Śrī are described as co-wives of some god, and this tradi-tion of their identity and difference continued down the ages. The cult of this goddess of wealth was taken up by the Buddhists because it supplied a suitable means of worship to the trading class laity. Accordingly, the goddess was conceived in Buddhist mythology as the daughter of Śakra. The Sirimā Devatā of Bharhut recalls Siridevī or Lakkhī mentioned in the Jātakas. With the growth of her popularity, Lakṣmī became Nagaralakṣmī, the protectress of cities, and then Rāja-Lakṣmī, fortune of the king. It appears that the cult of Śrī and Lakṣmī

was popularized before the beginning of the Christian era and that she was not originally linked with Viṣṇu. The Gajalakṣmī figures, with two elephants on either side anointing the goddess, appear in the coins from Kausāmbī (1st century B.C.), Ayodhyā and Ujjayinī (first century B.C. to first century A.D.)[23]. Coins of Vāyudeva and Viśākhadeva (all of Ayodhyā) show the goddess standing while on those of Śivadatta she is shown seated. Such was the popularity of this device that many alien rulers of Northern India like Azilises (A.D. 28-40), Ranjuvula and Sondāsa (A.D. 15) adopted it on their coins.[24] Relief carvings illustrating this motif are found on the early monuments of central India. Coins of Maues (20 B.C.-A.D. 22), Azes I (5 B.C.-A.D. 30) and Azes II show a female figure standing between trees. Marshall, following Whitehead,[25] says that the coins of Maues and Azes I depict Bachante among vines (Maenad according to Gardner)[26] while those of Azes II represent Demeter with cornucopia.[27] Coomaraswamy thinks that the said figures represent a Hellenized version of the *padmavāsinī* or *kamalālaya* type of Laksmī.[28]

The same deity, without the attendant elephants, either seated on a full-blossomed lotus or standing with a lotus in her hand, very often appears on the Mathura coins like those of Gomitra, Dṛdhamitra, Sūryamiṭra, Viṣṇumitra, Puruṣadatta, Kāmadatta, Uttamadatta, Balabhūti, Rāmadatta and Śivadatta. She also appears on the coins of the Śaka Śatraps, of the Rājanya Janapada, and of the Pañcāla kings. The Kuninda coins illustrate a stag on the right of the goddess.[29] These coins can collectively be dated from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. and some of the figures found therein may even stand for Durgā.[30] The lotus on which a few of these goddesses are made to stand is not the characteristic of Lakṣmī alone. It is not improbable that the goddess who appear in the coins of Azes is Pārvatī or Durgā. Reference should also be made in this connection to several unidentified goddesses of Hellenic character appearing on the copper and silver coins of Maues and Azes. The Babylonian Mother Goddess Inanna, worshipped in Syria as Nanaia or Nana, in Chaldea Nane and in parts of India as Nani, Naini, etc., occurs in the coins of the Kuṣāṇa kings.[31] On some of the coins of Huviska Śiva (Oeso or

Bhaveśa) is depicted in company of this goddess described as Nana. Another goddess, Umä (Ommo), appears on the coins of the same king with Śiva, holding a cornucopia, instead of lotus, like Demeter, Tyche and Ardoksho. Coins of the Kuṣāṇa king Vāsudeva represent a throned goddess, whose right hand holds a fillet and left a cornucopia, bearing the Greek legend Ardoksho.[32]

Numismatic evidence thus shows the great popularity of the goddess cult before and after the beginning of the Christian era, and what is derived from the coins may be substantiated by other archaeological evidence. We have already had occasion to refer to the stone-discs belonging to the period between the second century B.C. and first century A.D., depicting nude figures of the goddess of fertility, found at Taxila, Kosam, Patna and other historical sites[33] and to the terracotta figurines of the Mother Goddess from such widely separated places as Pāṭaliputra, Basarh, Sarnath Bulandibagh, Bhita, Samkisa, Kosam, Karia, Mathura, Taxila, etc. Numerous votive plaques with figurines of deities found at the Bhir mound, Taxila, form a class of antiquities of the second century B.C. In one very frequent type, the goddess is shown with full-flowing skirts, in another she is depicted as holding a bird in her hand while in a third she carries a child.[34] An interesting specimen from Basarh, belonging to the first century B.C. shows a winged goddess flanked on two sides by lotus stalks. The same site also yields a similar fragmentary specimen.[35] The winged goddess is again found in a bronze specimen from Dheri Akhun, in a stone relief from Mathura and in a stūpa-bracket at Sirkap, all belonging to the first century A.D. Images of Hārītī, the Buddhist goddess conceived as the protectress of children, belonging to the first century of the Christian era and later date, have been found in abundance.[36] The earliest representation of Mahiṣamardinī is said to be offered by certain terracotta plaques discovered at Nagar near Uniyara in the Tonk District, which are now preserved in the Amber Museum. One of these has been assigned to the first century B.C. or first century A.D. Sambhar has also yielded a terracotta plaque of white clay of Mahiṣamardinī believed to be of the first century A.D. The head of the plaque is broken. Excavations at Rairh in Rajasthan have yielded a very large number of nude and

semi-nude Mother Goddesses of not earlier than the first century A.D. Excavations at Kankali Tila, Mathura, have revealed some Jain specimens which offer an interesting study along the Buddhist and Brahmanical finds from other sites of the same place. Referring to an interesting headless statue of the goddess Sarasvatī discovered from the excavations of the Jain stūpa, Smith observes:

> The goddess is shown sitting squatted with her knees upon a rectangular pedestal, holding a manuscript in her left hand. The right hand which was raised has been lost. The figure is clothed in very stiffly executed drapery, a small attendant with hair dressed in rolls stand on each side. The attendant on the right has hands clasped in adoration.[37]

The pedestal bears an inscription relating to the dedication of the image in the fifty-fourth year of Kaṇiṣka. The sculpture thus can be dated in the first half of the second century A.D.

SPECIALIZATIONS: THE GUPTA AGE

The Gajalakṣmī motif, used as a coin-device by both indigenous and foreign rulers a few centuries earlier, was adopted as a symbol for the administrative offices by the imperial Guptas, who styled themselves *paramabhāgavata*, and also by other rulers belonging to the Gupta age and later, as is evident from numerous devices portrayed on terracotta and copper seals from Madhya Pradesh (Eran, Arang, etc.), Uttar Pradesh (Bhita, Rajghat, Kausambi, etc.) and Bihar (Basarh and Nālandā).[38] The Arodokso-Lakṣmī type, the former probably identified with the latter by the Kuṣāṇas, holding a cornucopia instead of a lotus, continued to be copied by the foreign successors of the Kuṣāṇas. viz., the Kidara Kuṣāṇas and the Huṇas (Toramāna, Mihirakula and some other Epthalite kings), influenced the initial issues of the Guptas, but the artistic sense of the age freed the goddess shortly from the crude and stereotyped representation, and very soon she became a full-fledged Indian Lakṣmī, traces of which can be noticed on the early

issues of Samudragupta. The identification of a goddess on the reverse of certain types of the Gupta coins has aroused some controversy because of her association with the lion and the lotus at the same time, e.g., the coins of Candragupta-Kumāra-devī type and the Lion-slayer type of Candragupta II.

It is difficult to identify the goddess depicted on the Gupta coins.[39] More suggestive are the numerous terracotta seals, mostly belonging to the early and late Gupta period. Durgā and Śiva are depicted on a few seals from Bhita.[40] The same site yields the seals of Śivamagha and Bhīmasena in which a female figure, probably Durgā, appears by the side of a bull. The goddess facing a lion found on many seals hailing from Bhita and Basarh can only be explained in terms of the goddess Durgā. Several Rajghat seals bear on them interesting figures of a goddess. An oval seal of sun-burnt clay bears a two-armed goddess, and the name of the deity, written below in Gupta characters, is Durggah.

There is an interesting type of the Ardhanārīśvara composite figure, the right half possessing all the iconographic features of Śiva and the left half those of Umā in a Gupta seal found at Bhita. A number of sculptures depicting this theme, to be dated from the Gupta to the medieval period, have been found in different parts of India. The Badami Ardhanārīśvara stone panel is a good representative of such figures. Particular interest attaches to an image of Śiva and Pārvatī from Bhita assigned to the Gupta age, showing the god and the goddess seated side by side on a throne.[41] The Śiva Pārvatī image from Kosam, also assigned to the Gupta age, and an earlier sandstone relief of the same god and goddess, now preserved in the Mathura museum, deserve special mention in this connection. The Kosam stone image inscription of Bhīmavarman stands on a broken vase which constitutes a standing group of Śiva-Pārvatī sculpture.[42] Pārvatī or Umā also appears in a terracotta plaque of the late Gupta period found among the ruins of an ancient Śiva temple of Ahicchatra.[43] Two pillars from Candimau, belonging to the Gupta period, depict in each the image of Śiva and Pārvatī and the Kirātārjunīya story respectively.[44] The site of Kosam also yields several terracotta reliefs of Śiva and Pārvatī.

Some of the finest sculptures of the Gupta and later periods

represent Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Buddhist and Jain goddesses. The Saptamātṛkā or Seven Mothers appear in Jain garb in the Satghara cave, the northernmost of the Khandagiri group. The female figures are variously depicted—ten-armed, four-armed and two-armed—the first five of which remind us of Brahmāṇī, Vaiṣṇavī, Indrāṇī, Māheśvarī and Kaumārī, as is suggested by their emblems, while the sixth and the seventh stand probably for Padmāvatī and Ambikā, the Jain counterparts of Manasā and Durgā. All of them except the first, sit in *lalitāsana*, while the fourth, fifth and seventh carry a small child in their arms. According to B.C. Bhattacharyya,[15] the fifth cannot be identified while the others stand for Cakreśvarī, Ajitādevī, Duritārī or Prajñapti, Gaurī or Mānavā, Padmāvatī and Ambikā respectively.

Images of popular river goddesses like Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, etc., are also met with.[16] But it was the Mahiṣamardinī form that became most popular. A very important Gupta image is found in a relief carved on the facade of a cave at Udayagiri near Bhilsa, Madhya Pradesh, which shows the goddess killing Mahiṣāsura, the buffalo-demon. Here the goddess is twelve-armed and the sculpture can be referred to at the beginning of the fifth century A.D. A terracotta plaque of Mahiṣamardinī from Bhadrakālī in the Ganganagar district of Rajasthan, belonging to the early Gupta period, shows the Devī in the act of killing the buffalo-demon with a *triśūla* which she holds in her upper right hand. The upper left hand is broken. With the lower left hand she holds the head of the buffalo-demon.[17] This plaque is now in the Bikaner Museum. In a beautiful plaque of the Amber Museum, the goddess holds a rectangular shield in her upper left hand and a *vajra* in the upper right. With her lower left hand she holds the tongue of the buffalo-demon. There is also a small lion at the foot of the goddess. In another of the same museum, the buffalo-demon is shown between the legs of the goddess who is seen pressing the horns of the buffalo.[18]

The structural temple of the goddess Durgā at Aihole was erected by the Cālukya kings who reigned between A.D. 550-642. The Aihole relief shows the eight-armed goddess piercing the upturned neck of the buffalo-demon. The chief

Cālukya monument is the series of the cave temples of Badami, the pillared balcony of which gives some of the finest figures of the goddess in her different forms. The monumental relief of Mahiṣamardinī in the Rāmeśvara cave at Ellora probably belongs to A.D. 650. The same cave contains figures of Pārvatī and the Saptamātṛkā which also occur in other caves. One of the most beautiful and delightful Pallava specimens is the Mahiṣamardinī of Mamallapuram, assigned to the seventh century A.D. which shows the goddess Durgā mounted on the lion, her eight hands armed with bow, sword, club conch, axe, gong, etc., the demon represented with the head of a buffalo holding a club and a sword.

The form of Durgā standing on the severed head of a buffalo is described in the *Śilappadikaram*,[49] while in the story of Sakkravāḷakkoṭṭam in the *Maṇimekalai*, we hear a temple of Durgā. From this it appears that even in the pre-Pallava days, temples for Durgā were built. Of the Pallava monuments, the Koḍikālmaṇḍapam of Mahabalipuram and the Yāli-maṇḍapam at Saluvankuppam appear to be intended for Durgā as may be gleaned from the bas-relief sculptures of the dvārapālikas flanking on the shrine entrances in the case of the first and from the facade of the cave in that of the second. That the Draupadīratha was originally intended for Durgā is evident from her carved image in the hind wall of the shrine. Besides her own temples, Pallava sculptures of Durgā are found in the rock-cut caves. The Pallava Durgās do not reveal any iconographic rigidity, standing either on the severed head of a buffalo as at Singavaram, the Ādivarāha and Trimurti caves or simply on a *padmapīṭha* as in the Varāhamaṇḍapa and in the hind wall of the shrine in the Draupadīrtha.

MAHISAMARDINI AND OTHER FORMS OF DURGA

The earliest representation of the Mahiṣamardinī form of the goddess found so far, as we have noticed, is probably a terra-cotta plaque from Nagar in Tonk district, Rajasthan, now preserved in the Amber Museum. It belongs to the first century B.C. or the beginning of the first century A.D.[50] Six statues of the Kuṣāṇa age. preserved in the Mathura Museum, appear

to contain some other early representations of the Mahiṣamardinī form, in which the goddess in shown as holding a buffalo, the form in which the demon is represented, raised to her waist, pressing with her one hand the hind part of the buffalo, and breaking his neck with another. Five of these figures are six-armed and the remaining one is four-armed. The weapons they bear consist of spear and trident. The lion is absent.[51] Of the Mahiṣamardinī sculptures of the Gupta age, reference may be made to the one found in the Udayagiri cave near Vidisa which belongs to c. A.D. 400. Another image of the sixth century A.D. has been found in the Bhumara temple. Some fine miniature stone reliefs of two-armed Mahiṣamardinī belonging to the Gupta period were unearthed by Marshall from Bhita.[52] Besides, some miniature stone figurines from the same place depict her either with two or four arms, engaged in combat with the demon in the shape of a buffalo. A fine bronze figure from Chamba depicts the Devī as driving the trident into the neck of the buffalo who is being pressed down by one of her legs with the tail being held in one of her hands. The pose, also found partly in Bhita relief, corresponds to the description found in the *Devīmāhātmya*.

A very large number of post-Gupta Mahiṣamardinī images are preserved in different museums of India. The seventh century Mamallapuram image and the image in the Vaital Deul at Bhuvaneswar are famous post-Gupta representations of the goddess and so is the celebrated Ellora image. Several reliefs in Mamallapuram illustrate in a very interesting manner the different phases of the struggle between the Devī and the Asura. In one of them, the eight-armed goddess is shown engaged in actual combat with the buffalo-headed demon, while in others she is shown standing on the severed head of the Asura. The early Mahiṣamardinī images are two-armed, four-armed, or six-armed, but in the later ones, we have their multiplications. The early Cola-Durgās are eight-armed in the Pallava fashion, but one belonging to the Nāgesvarasvāmī temple of Kumbhakoṇam is four-armed. The goddess is represented in Bengal sculptures with sixteen, eighteen, twenty and even thirty-two hands. Reference may be made in this connection to a twenty-armed image from Sirala in the Rajsahi district belonging to

the tenth century, which is now lost. A peculiar iconographic attribute of Durgā in Tamil land is her association with a stag which reminds us of Artemis and also the figures in the Kuninda coins. Some of the literary descriptions like *Pāykalaippāvai* and *Kalaippariurdi* show that the darting deer was her mount. Self-mutilation was probably a feature of the worship of the goddess during the Pallava and early Cola period, as is evident from several Pallava panels where the devotee is shown to offer his own head. This custom might have some bearing on the later conception of Chinnamastā. A late Pallava inscription upon a slab refers to a warrior who had offered his own head to the goddess, and the slab itself contains a relief of that act.[53] The Tiruvalangadu plates of Rajendra Cola,[54] says that Vijayālaya built a temple of Niśumbhamardinī at Tanjore, and this aspect of Durgā appears to have been popular during the early Cola period. The representation is found even in miniature bas-reliefs in the temples in Punjai, Pullamangai and Tirukkarugavur, all in the Tanjore district.

Mahiṣamardinī also became popular in Rajasthan and we have already referred to some early specimens. The exterior of the main sanctum of the Ambikā temple at Jagat, about thirty-four miles from Udaipur (10th century) is studded with elegant sculptures of the eight-armed Mahiṣamardinī. The three niches on the three sides of the temple depict Mahiṣamardinī in three different styles which is an exceptional feature.[55] The temple sculptures of Osian, Abaneri and Paranagar are also fine specimens of Durgā as Mahiṣamardinī. The principal back niche of the Osian temple preserves an image of Mahiṣamardinī addressed as Saccikā or Saciyā in the inscriptions of V.S. 1234 and 1236.[56] At Bikaner, there is a temple of the eight-armed Durgā, popularly known as Nagenekji and another of this kind is at Bhainsolgarh in the Udaypur district. Numerous eight or ten-armed images of Mahiṣamardinī have been discovered in different parts of Eastern India. The walls of Vaitāla, Śiśireśvara and Mārkaṇḍeśvara temples of Orissa contain representations of the goddess. An image which should be specially mentioned in this connection comes from a North Bengal village in the Dinajpur district portraying in a very interesting manner the nine Durgās (Navadurgā) with the eighteen-armed Mahiṣamardinī as the central figure and with sixteen-armed miniature

figures of the same type grouped round it. Another interesting specimen is a stone image of the thirtytwo-armed Devī engaged in combat with demons. This also comes from the same district.[57] A two-armed Durgā of the Pāla period hails from South Mohammadpur in the Tippera District. Ten-armed Mahiṣamardinī forms are found from Dulmi (Manbhum) and Sakta (Dacca), both belonging to the twelfth century. A sand-stone Durgā image has recently been found at Rajsahi.

> The goddess is standing on a plain pedestal in *samābhaṅga* pose with standing figures of Gaṇeśa on her right and Kārttikeya on her left. Her *vāhana*, the lion, is seen crouching on the pedestal. The goddess wears a transparent petticoat-like garment which is held at her waist by a jewelled girdle. She has also put on a necklace, *patrakuṇḍalas*, armlets, bangles and anklets. Her hair is done up in a high bun which is encircled by a jewelled fillet. The lower right hand of the goddess is shown in *varada-mudrā*. There is a sword in her upper right hand, a shield in the corresponding left, and an indistinct object (fruit) in her lower left hand. The upper part of the plain back slab is rounded. The sculpture, which is much corroded, is datable in the 10th century A.D.[58]

This is a prototype of the Durgā image that has been worshipped in Bengal since the sixteenth century. In modern images, the goddess is fashioned in clay as standing with her right foot on a lion with different weapons in ten hands. The Asura, whom she is shown as overpowering, is represented as emerging from the neck of a headless buffalo with a scimitar in his right hand. The spear of the goddess is shown as piercing the chest of the demon. The goddess is flanked on either side by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, and Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa.

UMA, PARVATI, ETC.

We have already referred to the Śiva-Pārvatī image from Kosam which has been assigned to the Gupta age. It is now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, which shows Śiva

and Durgā standing side by side, each with the right hand raised and the open palm turned to the front. In his left hand, Śiva holds a water-vessel and Pārvatī, with a head-dress of most elaborate construction, carries something like a trident. Several panels in the rock-cut shrines of Ellora depict the god and goddess seated together in company of a host of attendants on either side. In some cases, Pārvatī is shown seated on the left thigh of Śiva. One relief from Khiching shows the two-armed ithyphallic god, seated in an easy posture, clasping with his left hand the Devī seated on his left thigh. In the centre of the marked-off pedestal below sits a four-armed Gaṇeśa.[59] A still earlier red sandstone relief of Hara-Pārvatī is in the Mathura Museum which shows the divine couple leaning on Nandī holding *nīlotpala* buds in their hands. These figures remind us of the *āliṅgana-candraśekhera* image from the Bṛhadīśvara temple of Tanjore which shows the god standing to front with a slight bend, his front left hand clasping Umā, his other three hands holding different objects.[60] Reference may be made to a four-armed standing figure of Pārvatī, found in one of the rock-cut shrines of Ellora, holding in her hands a rosary, a Śivaliṅga, a miniature figure of Gaṇapati and a water vessel. But although in the caves of Ellora and Elephanta, separate shrines of Pārvatī are noticed, such a provision was absent in the Pallava and early Cola temples. However, reference to such a shrine is met with in the Ennayiram inscription of Rajendra Cola.[61] A new shrine of Pārvatī was added to the Bṛhadīśvara temple of Tanjore at a later date.

Medieval sculptures representing the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, usually described as Kalyāṇasundara or Vaivāhika-mūrti are common in different parts of India. One of the most outstanding examples of this type is the Elephanta relief. Such sculptures are also common in Bengal which portray some local marriage customs. Mention has already been made of the Ardhanārīśvara form in which the right half comprises all the iconographic features of Śiva, while the left half, those of Umā. A good number of sculptures depicting this theme, to be dated from the Gupta to the medieval period, have been found in different parts of India. The Badami Ardhanārīśvara is probably the best representative of such figures. Several seated images have been discovered in Bengal and a few of them can

be identified with Aparajitā, Mahālakṣmī, etc., on the basis of various iconographic texts. A shrine in the Bheraghat temple complex contains an image of Umā-Maheśvara. The Patna Museum contains a good number of Umā-Maheśvara images in stone, hailing from different parts of Bihar, which have been assigned to a period between c. 9th and 12th centuries A.D. A sculpture from Saran shows Umā-Maheśvara with Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya on either side. The Kurkihar collection of the Patna Museum have two exquisite bronze specimens of Umā-Maheśvara.[62] A ninth century stone image of Pārvatī with sword in the upper right hand, a round object in the lower right, shield in upper left and *triśūla* in the main left hand is in the Patna Museum. It is from Gangapur in Patna. Some medieval reliefs hailing from Bihar, now in the collection of the Indian Museum, show the four-armed goddess seated astride on the back of her mount, carrying a sword and a shield in her back hands, a *śūla* in the front left, the front right being in *varada* pose. Another Indian Museum sculpture emphasizes the mother aspect of Durgā Siṃhavāhinī, seated in *lalitāsana* on the back of her lion, with a child on her lap. Sometimes she is shown in association with Kārttikeya. The Patna Museum has two images of this type in stone, where the goddess is seated on the lion with the main left hand holding Kārttikeya, main right in *varada-mudrā*, upper left holding a shield and the upper right a sword. A particular form of the four-armed standing figures of the goddess of the medieval period, commonly found in Bengal, shows her standing erect, with such attributes as a boon (*vara*) or pomegranate, a Śivaliṅga (cf. the Ellora image referred to), a trident and an iguana (*godhikā*) carved on the pedestal. There are different varieties of this type. A bronze medieval figure of the Devī, found at Nālandā, shows her association with iguana. Other forms of the goddess, terrible as well as benign, as found in medieval sculptures will be dealt with in a subsequent section.

LAKSMI AND SARASVATI

The cult of the Female Principle influenced all the principal religious sects of India. Owing to this influence, their principal

gods came to be associated with an eternal female partner, philosophically conceived as *śakti* or *prakṛti* and re'igiously as Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī or Umā. This idea was materialized in gradually increasing representations of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā-Sarasvatī and Śivā-Pārvatī in temple niches, as for instance in the temple of Ruhāvī (and later in the Navalākhā temple of Gumli) in Gujarat, and in many Haihaya monuments, e.g., in the Virāṭeśvara temple at Sohagpur in Rewa where, over the doorway, an eight-handed male figure is flanked by Brahmā and his wife, Viṣṇu and his wife and Pārvatī with Gaṇeśa. Of the goddesses associated with Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī (Śrī and Puṣṭi) and Bhūdevī are the most represented ones. In later Bengal tradition, however, they are regarded as daughters of Durgā. They usually appear as attending consorts of the cult god, though their independent figures are not wanting. In the North and East-Indian Viṣṇu reliefs, Śrī and Puṣṭi are almost invariably shown as the principal companions, while in the South Indian ones, the place of Puṣṭi is taken by Bhūdevī. In the Brahmanical mythology, Kubera is sometimes associated with Lakṣmī or Śrī, the goddess of fortune, who is the presiding deity of the *aṣṭa nidhis*. The Buddhist counterpart of Kubera is Jambhala whose consort, according to the Mahāyāna tradition, is Vasudhārā who is the Buddhist adaptation of the earth goddess Bhūmi or Pṛthivī. We have a few sculptural representations of this goddess. These are to be dealt with in the section on the Buddhist goddesses.

We have already had occasion to refer to the representations of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī on the seals, especially on those found from Basarh and Bhita. Iconographic texts containing the descriptions of the goddess Śri-Lakṣmī, refer to her two, four and rarely many armed varieties, but the two-armed variety is more common. The representation of Srī-Lakṣmī in Indian art from the earliest known times onwards has followed several modes. The Buddhist conception of this goddess is represented in the early art of Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodh Gaya, etc. The goddess, so frequently represented in early Buddhist art, is often depicted as either standing or seated on a lotus and being bathed by two elephants. Earlier representations of this characteristically developed iconographic type of Gajalakṣmī have been described. In many medieval temples, especially those of

Orissa, this Gajalakṣmī motif is carved, whatever might have been the cult affiliation, on the shrines. She is elaborately depicted even in separated niches of the medieval temples. Of the important Orissan Gajalakṣmīs, we may refer to those on the tympanum of the Anantagumpha, on the sanctum doorway of the Mukteśvara temples at Bhubaneswar, on the eastern doorway of the Jagamohana of Konarak, on the wall of a shrine at Mahavira-chak in Jajpur, on the door-frame of the Ratnagiri Mahāvihāra (with Buddhist affiliation), etc. One interesting figure is found in the Kailāsa temple of Ellora where the goddess, bathed by elephants, is seated on a lotus in a lotus pond amidst numerous celestial attendants. Another beautiful medieval Gajalakṣmī is found at Khiching in Mayurbhanj, Orissa, where the goddess is shown inside a decorated square frame seated gracefully, bathed by the elephants, with her right hand placed on the knee in the *varada* pose and left holding a lotus. Reference to one eleventh century bronze figure of a four-armed Gajalakṣmī, hailing from North Bengal and now in the Rajsahi Museum, may be made in this connection. One of its hands is broken, the other three hold a citron, an elephant goad and a jewelled basket. Two stone sculptures, hailing from Kaveripakkam in North Arcot District and now preserved in the Madras Museum, are of special interest, and so is a bronze from a village called Enadi in Tanjore. These figures may be described as symbols-cum-images of the goddess, demonstrating in an interesting manner the relation between the aniconic symbol and the icon itself. We have already the occasion to refer to the seals from Basarh,[63] Bhita,[64] Nālandā, Rajghat, Ahiceatra and Eran and also those of the kings of Sarabhapura and Tripura as well as the coins from Kausambi, Ujjayini and Mathura and those of some early Ayodhyā kings, Azilises, etc., which portray the Gajalakṣmī device, and also the doubtful, so far as the identification is concerned, Pañcōla, Kuninda, Yaudheya and Kuṣāṇa coins as well as those of Pantaleon, Agathocles and Azes.

Lakṣmī continued to appear on the Gupta coins as well as on post-Gupta issues. Isolated images of Lakṣmī, sometimes Aṣṭa-Lakṣmī, including Gaja-Lakṣmī, corresponding to the eight Śaktis of Viṣṇu, are found here and there all over India. The Patna Museum contains three stone images from

Pariakoladi in Chingleput and Kodampur in Madras, two of which have been identified with Bhūdevī and the third one with Śrī or Lakṣmī. It is a standing image, wearing a peaked crown and ornaments, holding a lotus stalk in the left hand, the right hand projecting downwards. The association of Lakṣmī with Nārāyaṇa is alluded to in literature and inscriptions. In medieval Orissan sculptural representations, we have fine specimens of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image found at Kendupatna in Cuttack district and Chaurasi in Puri district. Lakṣmī is specially associated with the Varāha and Narasiṃha incarnations of Viṣṇu. In connection with the former, she is installed in the Varāha temple at Jajpur while with that of the latter she is found in some Bhubaneswar temples. Her Tantric Mahālakṣmī form is represented in an eighteen-armed image at Jajpur in the front of the Trilocana temple. Like the Mahālakṣmī temple of Kolhapur in Mahārāshtra, there is a Lakṣmī temple inside the inner courtyard of the Jagannātha temple at Puri.

Like Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī had a prominent place in Buddhism and Jainism. We have alrcady referred to the Jain Sarasvatī of Mathurā. An early Buddhist prototype of this goddess is to be found at Bharhut[65] in which she is depicted as playing on a harp. Her separate figures from the late Gupta period onwards are comparatively common. Two-armed images of the goddess are shown as playing on a *Vīnā*, but in the four-armed ones, the back hands carry a rosary and a manuscript. Her usual vehicle is a swan, but in some Bengal sculptures we often come across a lamb. A sculpture of a much later date (c. 10th century A.D.) hailing from Khitching in Mayurbhanj, Orissa, is of unique interest, showing as it does the half-length figure of a seven-hooded Nāginī, decorated with ornaments and wearing a *karaṇḍamukuta*, playing on a *vīnā*. According to Banerjea,[66] the number of the hoods behind her head and the type of head-dress worn by her distinctly prove that she is not an ordinary snake maiden, but a goddess with iconographic affinity to Sarasvatī. A sculpture from the Bṛhadīśvara temple of Tanjore shows a two-armed goddess, right hand broken and left hand holding a manuscript, seated erect in the *Vīrāsana* pose. She wears jewellery and a crown with a canopied projection, behind which is a tree. She has *cauri*-bearing attendants on her either side and also flying Vidyādharas and bearded *ṛṣis* as attendant

figures. An image of Sarasvatī was installed at Dhara by Bhoja (A.D. 1000-1055) which reveals Paramāra sculpture at the best. Other specimens of the goddess are found at Mandu, on the walls of the Nīlakaṇṭha temple at Udaipur, within the enclosures of the Mahākāla temple at Ujjayini and other places. A bronze image of Sarasvatī hailing from Nālandā is now in the Nālandā Museum. The goddess is with her *Vīnā* and flanked by two attendant deities. A beautiful twelfth century figure of Sarasvatī, now in the collection of Dacca Museum, recovered from a village called Vajrayoginī, shows the four-armed goddess seated in *lalitākṣepa* on a double-petalled lotus, playing on a *vīnā* in her two front hands and holding a rosary and a manuscript in her back right and left hands respectively, with a small swan as her vehicle carved in the extreme left corner of the pedestal.[67] One of the finest medieval figures of Sarasvatī is in the Rajsahi Museum which was found in a village in the Borga district of Bengal.

MATRKAS, YOGINIS, ETC.

We have already referred to the Jain representation of the seven Divine Mothers in Khandagiri. The Sapta Mātṛkās are often carved in relief on a rectangular stone slab with the figures of Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa on either side. The usually accepted list of the Mātṛkās supported by iconographic data consists of Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Cāmuṇḍā. Sometimes this order is slightly changed with an increase in number. Stone and bronze sculptures are not unknown in which the number of the Mothers are only three, and they are usually Brahmāṇī, Kaumārī and Vaiṣṇavī. One such bronze composition, originally found at Imadpur and now in the British Museum, shows these three goddesses seated between Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa. Separate reliefs of Mātṛkās are also common. On the bank of the Mārkaṇḍeya Sarovara at Puri, separate images of the Mothers are placed side by side inside a verandah. Four-faced and four-armed Brahmāṇī is seated with a child on her left lap and the swan beneath the couch. The figure does not wear any ornament, but the sacred thread and the *jaṭāmukuṭa* are prominently shown. She is seated

in the *ardhaparyaiika* pose which is mostly followed by other figures. Māheśvarī is seated with her bull mount beneath the couch wearing many ornaments. Her back hands are broken, front right hand appearing to have been in the *abhaya* pose and the front left holding the child in her lap. Kaumārī is shown with the child on her lap and her peacock beneath the couch. Her two right hands are broken. Vārāhi is characterized by two rows of curled locks of hair rising upwards, the *Kapāla* in the back left hand, the child on her lap and the buffalo mount. The four-armed Indrāṇī is shown with the elephant beneath her couch, back right hand holding a *vajra* and the front left clasping the child on her left lap. The Patna Museum contains a complete set of individual Saptamātṛkā sculptures from Saraikela in the Singhbhum district. The group consists of Vaisṇavī, Māheśvarī, Indrāṇī, Brahmāṇī, Vārāhī and Cāmuṇḍā. All excepting Vārāhī have a child on their left thigh. They belong to c. 12th century A.D.[69]

The growing importance of Śāktism brought the Mātṛkās into greater prominence and distributed their cult far and wide. The colossi of the Eight Mothers from Muktimaṇḍapa near Jajpur and the Eight Mothers with Śivadūtī on the bank of the Vaitaraṇī indicate their popularity in the Orissa region. At present, we have two sets of Mātṛkās at Jajpur. The one referred to here is the first set while of the second, two colossal figures of Vārāhī and Indrāṇī survive. An inscribed image of Cāmuṇḍā also comes from Jajpur which was installed by queen Vatsadevī, probably of the Bhaumakara dynasty.[70] The Paraśurāmeśvara temple of Bhuvaneswar contains a group of Saptamātṛkā carved in relief on the north-west corner of the northern wall of *jagamohana*. The Vaitāla temple contains a terrific Cāmuṇḍā as its presiding deity and on the inner dark walls of the *jagamohana* we find a group of Seven Mothers, all of them sitting in *yogāsana* pose on a full-blown lotus with their different attributes. In the Mukteśvara temple, the presentation of Seven Mothers occurs on an eight-petalled lotus carved on the ceiling of its *jagmohana*. The figure of a four-armed Vaiṣṇavī with Garuḍa beneath her seat, hailing from Khiching, deserves special mention. The goddess gracefully holds the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in her back hands, has her front right hand in the *abhaya* pose and clasps the child with her front left.

In Bengal, some of the Mothers are separately sculptured and Cāmuṇḍā of various forms, such as Rūpavidyā, Siddhayogeśvarī and Danturā, has found independent representation. An image of the last-mentioned aspect of Cāmuṇḍā, showing a two-armed goddess sitting on her haunches, found originally in a Burdwan village, strikingly portray the weird and uncanny "with its bare canine teeth, rounded eyes, ghastly smile, emaciated body, lean and pendulous breasts, sunken belly and peculiar sitting posture."[71] It is now in the collection of the Vaṇgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum, Calcutta. Several other figures of Danturā have been found in North Bengal. A relief originally hailing from Sutna in Madhya Pradesh and now in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, depicts an eight-armed image of Nārasiṃhī seated in the *ardhaparyaṅka* pose on the back of a stylized lion. The goggle-eyed lion-face of the goddess and the face of the lion-mount opened wide endow the composition with a grotesque character. The Asutosh Museum of the Calcutta University preserves a figure of Vārāhi which shows the four-armed form of the goddess in question, with a fish in one of her right hands. The goddess Vaiṣṇavī is sometimes replaced by Vāgīśvarī whose figure in octo-alloy, with eight hands, is now in the Rajsahi Museum. Another inscribed four-handed image of Vāgīśvarī of A.D. 940 comes from Nālandā.

In Rajasthan, Cāmuṇḍā is worshipped at Jodhpur, Jaswantpur, Bhinmal, Ajmer and other places and a large number of Mātṛkā images found at Mandor, Nagda, Chitorgarh, Ramgarh, Kekinda, Phalodi, Osian and other places bear testimony to the popularity of her cult. Specially important is the group of Eight Mothers of Mandor. They are carved out of a single rock which carries an inscription of V.S. 742. Beginning from Gaṇeśa at the left, the Mothers have two hands alternately. Another group of Eight Mothers is found on the shrine door of the Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva temple of Kekinda which is modern Jasnagar near Merta city. The temple belongs to the tenth century A.D. where the Mothers are shown with children in their laps, a feature which is common also to some Mātṛkā sculptures of Orissa. To emphasize the mother-aspect, these goddesses are sometimes shown as carrying a suckling baby in their laps, and the Ellora Saptamātṛkā panel is a striking example of this type of Mātṛkā images. The Seven Mothers were favourite deities of the early

Cālukyas and their cult spread in the Tamil land about the beginning of the eighth century A.D.[72] The first sculptural representation of the Mātṛkās is found in the Kailāsanātha temple of Kanchipuram, and subsequently their sculptures are noticed in the Pāndya and Muttaraiya cave temples at Tirugokarnam, Malaiyadippatti, Kunnattur and Tirukkalakkudi. An inscription of Cola Rājakeśarī states that during the reign of the Pallava king Dantivarman, a temple of Saptamātṛkā was built at Alambakkam in the Tiruchirapalli district.[73] In an inscription of Pārthivendravarman, reference is made to a temple of Mātṛkās at Velacheri in the Chingleput district.[74] From the ninth century onwards, it became an established fashion to construct small shrines of the Mātṛkās in the temple enclosures.

The primitive Yoginī cult was also revived on account of the increasing influence of the cult of Seven or Eight Mothers. Originally, the Yoginīs were probably human beings, women of flesh and blood, priestesses who were supposed to be possessed by the goddess, and later they were raised to the status of divinity. By the usual process of multiplication, their number increased from eight to sixteen and then to sixty-four and more. In Sanskrit literature, the Yoginīs have been represented as the attendants of various manifestations of Durgā engaged in fighting with Śumbha and Niśumbha and the principal Yoginīs are identified with the Mātṛkās. The Orissan village Hirapur contains a temple of sixty-four Yoginīs. In the inner face of the circular wall of the enclosure, there are sixty niches, each containing an image of Yoginī. All of them are in standing postures. Orissa has also another temple of sixty-four Yoginīs at Ranipur Jharial in the Balangir district. Dudhai in Lalitpur district has circular Yoginī temples. In the sixty-four Yoginī temple at Bheraghat near Jabbulpore are found not only sixty-four Yoginīs but also the eight Śaktis, three rivers, four other goddesses, Śiva and Gaṇeśa, thus making a total of eighty-one figures. The Bheraghat figures are damaged, but most of them fortunately retain their names inscribed in the sixty-five peripheral chapels. The names are not canonical and are evidently adopted from popular cults. The presence of Sri-Teramva, a Mahiṣamardinī figure with sixteen hands and of Sarvatomukhī with a lotus under-seat containing Tantric emblems in the

Bheraghat icons is interesting. At Khajuraho, the sixty-four Yoginīs appear in an oblong temple.

OTHER FORMS OF THE GODDESS AND THEIR SHRINES

The goddess Ekānaṃśā, mythologically associated with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, is worshipped as the principal deity in the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple at Bhuvaneswar with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma on her two sides. Iconological descriptions of this goddess are found in the *Bṛhatsaṁhita*,[75] *Viṣṇudharmottara*,[76] etc. Several medieval Eastern Indian stone and bronze reliefs of Ekānaṃśā have been discovered, of which reference may be made to an inscribed bronze image recovered from Imadpur in Bihar, and now in the British Museum, which shows, the two-armed goddess standing erect on a lotus with her right hand stretched down in *varada* pose, her left hand holding a mirror.[77] The image belongs to the Pāla period. From the same site has been recovered a fine bronze composition of the Mātṛkā triad to which we have already had occasion to refer. It appears that these two Imadpur bronzes were cast by the same person, because the technique of modelling and casting in both of them is identical. One of the earliest Devī figures can be seen in the Mamallapuram panel which shows the goddess standing under an umbrella. She is four-armed. Her back hands carry *śaṅkha* and *cakra* and the front ones are in the *abhaya* and *kaṭihasta* poses. She is surrounded by *Gaṇas* and two seated human figures. One of them seated on her proper right is shown as cutting off his own head for offering it to her as a sacrifice. This particular feature of the relief is very interesting since it presupposes the Tantric conception of Chinnamastā, a few references to which have been made here. The Patna Museum contains an eight-armed image of Ksīrodarī with an emaciated body having *Kapāla* in front of the breast, *damaru*, *kartari*, elephant's skin, *triśūla* with a pierced demon and a head. The seventh hand rests on the knee and the eighth supports the elephant's skin. It is from Harsinghpur in Darbhanga district and belongs to c. 10th century A.D.

A remarkable sculpture from Kagajipara in Vikrampur in East Bengal, four feet in height, shows in its lower part a well-carved Śivaliṅga from the top of which emerges the half-length

figure of a four-armed goddess, profusely ornamented with her front hands in the *dhyānamudrā*, the back hands carrying a rosary and a manuscript. She has a youthful face and three eyes in meditative expression. There has been some difficulty about the correct identification of the image. According to Bhattasali,[78] this sculpture is the representation of Mahāmāyā which he proposes on the basis of some passages of the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Kālikā* Purāṇas. R.D. Banerji[79] on the other hand finds in this image a gradual blending of Buddhist and Hindu Tantricism and concludes that it represents the goddess Pārvatī in coitus with the phallus, an early form of the Yab-yum theme. According to J.N. Banerjea,[80] it is the goddess Tripurabhairavī, who is the same as Mahāmāyā, holding a rosary and a book, corresponding to a description found in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*. This supports Bhattasali's identification. Banerjea thinks that this mode of representing Śiva and Śakti together, as has been previously made in the Elephanta sculpture, has a significant bearing on the Ardhanārīśvara conception.

Side by side with the major Śākta deities, we have other goddesses like Jyeṣṭhā, the elder sister of Lakṣmī, but associated with misfortune (*Alakṣmī*), reference to whose temple is made in an eighth century inscription near Madura. Some iconological texts delineating the features of Jyeṣṭhā have been collected by Gopinath Rao who has also illustrated a few medieval reliefs of her which correspond to a great extent with the textual descriptions. The Tamil lexicon *Śendan Divakaram*, a work of the tenth century, mentions eight names of this goddess—Mugadi, Tauvai, Kālati, Mudevi, Kakkaikkoḍiyel, Kaḷudai Vāhinī, Śettai and Kedalanaṅgu. A few of her images are found in different parts of South India. With the development of the cult of Śakti, there was a conscious attempt to erect her separate shrines near the main sanctum, and this had become a regular feature of the South Indian temple complex. These shrines were known as *Tirumuṛṛam* and the deities associated with them consisted of different varieties of Durgā, as is evident from the Cola inscriptions.[81]

In Rajasthan, the shrines of Saciyā Mātā and Piplā Devī, belonging to the later series of the Osian group of temples should be mentioned in this connection. Shrines dedicated to the goddess Kālikā are found at Achalgarh (Mt. Abu), Chitor,

Nasirabad and Dholpur and those to the goddess Cāmuṇḍā at Jodhpur, Jaswantpur, Bhinmal, Ajmer and other places. An image of Ambā was installed at Amba by the Kacchawaha king Kankal Rao in A.D. 1037 who built a temple over it. Besides the forms mentioned here, Śakti was worshipped under different local names in Rajasthan, e.g., Karnimātā, (Deshnokh), Mokalmātā (Bāli), Khokrimātā (Tivri), Śākambharī, Āśāpurī (Sambhar), Kaivasamātā (Parvatsar) Khimalmātā (Vasantgargh), Kailadevi (Karauli), Sakraimātā (Khandela), Jinamātā (Raivasa), Susanimātā (Morkhana), etc. Of the Śakti temples of Gujarat, mention may be made of the shrine of Ranik Devi at Wadhwan in Kathiawar and that of Limboji Mātā at Dhilmal.

In Central India, a few of the Amarkantak and Khajuraho group of temples were dedicated to Śakti. The temple of Devī Jagadambā at Khajuraho is marked by an exuberance of sculptures and rich ornamentation. The Caunṣat Yoginī temple at Khajuraho should specially be mentioned for its architectural traits. Temples dedicated to sixty-four Yoginīs are scattered all over Central India. The sixty-four Yoginī temples at Mitauli near Padhauli (eleventh century) is marked by sixty-five principal chapels and a circular central shrine with a *maṇḍapa* in front.[82] Circular Yoginī temples, as we have noted above, are also found at Ranpur Jharial, Dudhai and Lalitpur in Orissa. The temples of Mohinī, Kapālinī and Gaurī at Bhuvaneswar, Vimlā at Puri, Kicakeśvarī at Khiching, Virajā at Jajpur, Maṅgalā at Kakatpur, Curcikā at Banki, Ugratārā at Bhusandapur, Vārāhī at Chaurasi, Saralā at Jhankad, Solapuamā and Caṇḍī at Cuttack, Saptamātṛkā at Belkhandi Dharmaśālā and the neighbouring areas of Jajpur, Yoginīs at Hirapur, Samaleśvarī at Sambalpur, etc., show the wide distribution of the Śakti cult in Orissa. A few of these temples, however, belong to a later date. The Gaurī temple at Bhuvaneswar contains a Śakti image as its presiding deity.

In South India, Śakti shrines could only raise their heads within the compounds of the great Śiva temples. The Chola inscriptions speaks of two varieties of temples *Srikoyil* and *Tirumuṛṛam*, denoting the shrines for male gods and female deities respectively. In South India, the Amman shrines came into vogue from about the eleventh century and since then, the twin shrines of Śiva and Amman came to represent the

dual aspect of Śiva-Śakti. South Indian centres of Tantric culture will be mentioned later.

From different sites of Bengal, numerous Śakti images have been found, of which special mention should be made of the Caṇḍi image from Dalbazar, Dacca (third year of Lakṣmaṇa-sena) which is often identified with Bhuvaneśvarī. A four-armed image of Śarvānī found at Mangalbari, Dinajpur, has been assigned to the Pāla period. One of the earliest dated pleasant images is that of Sarvaṇī in bronze or octo-alloy, discovered in Chauddagram near Tipperah, and belongs to an early period. Of other four-armed goddesses reference should be made to the images of the Devi from Mandoil (Rajsahi) and Maheswar-para (Khulna), and seated images from Bogra, Nowgong (with Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa; identified with Sarvamaṅgalā) and Niamatpur (sandstone image identified with Aparājitā). A six-armed seated goddess, identified with Bhuvaneśvarī, is found at Shekati in Jessore district, while another, a twenty-armed goddess, identified with Mahālakṣmī, belonging to the 10th century, is found at Simla in the Rajsahi district. Of the Mātṛkā images, reference should be made to those of Cāmuṇḍā from Betna, the ruins of Rampal and Attahasa. A Brahmāṇī image is found at Devagram in Nadia.

BUDDHIST AND JAIN GODDESSES

The Buddhist texts of the earlier period, as we have seen, contain numerous references to the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī, in which she is described as *devakumārikā* and associated with the northern and southern quarters. In the Jain texts, the same goddess is mentioned, who appeared wearing a garland of *dīnāras* (gold coins) on her breast and being bathed by two elephants, in the dream of Triśalā, the mother of Mahāvīra on the night she conceived the great Jina in her womb. She is generally described as well-dressed, decked with various orna-ments, having such physical traits as fully developed breasts, a narrow waist and heavy buttocks. It may be observed in this connection that these traits also hold good in the cases of the figures of Yakṣiṇīs and Devatās of early Buddhist art. One standing Bharhut figure of the said type, which is technically

called *nyagrodha-parimaṇḍala*, indicative of the emphasized depictions of maternal organs, is mentioned as Sirimā Devatā. The goddess stands in the *samapādasthānaka* pose, i.e., two legs standing erect with the feet slightly extended on both sides, with her left hand hanging straight by her side and resting on her hip, while her right hand holds a flower. Other variants of this type, shown in Sanchi, Bodh Gaya, etc., depict her almost in an identical pose, although in some cases she is shown as standing in a lotus wood, holding a lotus in one of her hands and so on. A female figure seated on the raised pericarp of a lotus carved on a section of a fragmentary coping stone from Amaravati can be identified with Śrī-Lakṣmī. Other iconographic types of the goddess are frequently represented in the early Buddhist art of Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodh Gaya, Amaravati and other places. She is depicted as either standing or seated on a lotus, or surrounded by lotuses and being bathed by two elephants—in the manner of the well-known Gajalakṣmī.

Like Śrī-Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī was also held in high veneration by the Buddhists and the Jains, and the latter assigned her a specially honoured place in the hierarchy as the head of the Śrutadevatās and Vidyādevīs. A much mutilated figure carved on a railing pillar at Bharhut, standing in a graceful pose on a pedestal and playing on a harp with her two hands, can be presumed to be an early Buddhist prototype of this goddess.[83] We have already had the occasion to describe the sculptural representation of the celebrated Jain Sarasvatī, unearthed from the Kankali Tila of Mathura. It is one of the earliest figures of the goddess Sarasvatī with a manuscript as her emblem. The sculpture was found in 1899.[84] The Nagpur Museum contains a bronze image of the Jain Sarasvatī acquired from Rajnakin Khinkhini in the Murtijapur district. Bronze images of Jain Sarasvatī have also been discovered from Vasantagarh and Akota. The beautiful Sarasvatī image from Pullu in Bikaner also deserves special mention.[85]

We have already referred to the fact that the Jain texts classify their deities into four groups, but the deities whose images are usually found in Jain iconographic art comprise the Navagrahas, the Dikpālas, the Yakṣa and Yakṣinī attendants of the Tīrthaṃkaras, usually described as their Upāsakas and Śasanadevatās. Apart from the aforesaid Śrī-Lakṣmī and

Sarasvatī who is the presiding deity of the sixteen Śruta or Vidyādevīs, there are the Mātṛkās, the Bhairavas, the Yoginīs, etc. A section of the Satghara cave of Khandagiri contain the earlier representations of the Śāsanadevatās. It contains two rows of figures, the upper showing the 24 Tīrthaṃkaras, and the lower 24 female figures, the corresponding Śasanadevatās. They are also found in the Gupta and post-Gupta sculptures. Their iconography is extremely varied, being endowed with eight, ten, twelve and even twenty arms. Their names and iconology are mostly similar to those of their Brahmanical counterparts, but there are also exceptions. In some cases, the names, emblems and mounts of the Śasanadevatās emphasise their Brahmanical association. The iconology of Ambikā, whose cult was especially popular in West Bengal, leaves little doubt that she is a Jain adaptation of the Hindu goddess of the same name. She rides a lion and holds in her four hands a bunch of mangoes, a noose, a child and an elephant goad, and is thus the Jain counterpart of Durgā, one of whose early appellations is Ambikā. Her second name Kuṣmaṇḍinī appears also to have been derived from Kuṣmaṇḍī or Kuṣmaṇḍā which is an epithet of Durgā. Sometimes she is shown accompanied by seven dancing female figures indicative of the Jain Saptamatṛkā concept. Images of Ambikā are found all over India and her two, four, eight and even twenty-armed varieties of the early and late medieval periods are known. The wall paintings of the Vardhamāna temple at Jain-Kanci (Tiruparuttikunram in Madras) illustrate the story of Agnitā, who in Jain mythology, is the human form of Ambikā. The Jain temple of Paṭṭainī Devī near Bharhut contains an Ambikā image with twenty-three other Yakṣiṇīs carved on her three sides. The Akota hoard contains a unique bronze Ambikā. Another bronze image of Ambikā is from Nalgora in Bengal and a third from Aluara, Manbhum, deserve special mention. Some medieval reliefs in the collection of Rajsahi Museum represent Ambikā and her consort Gomedha seated underneath the branches of a tree with children in their laps. A free standing stone image of Ambikā is found at Pakbirra in Purulia district. The village Ambikanagar, thirty-six miles south-west of Bankura railway station, has an image of Ambikā to whom the village owes its name. About three miles east of this place is a village called Barkola which

has yielded three complete Jain images, one of which is certainly Ambikā.

Reference has already been made to the Jain Mātṛkās carved on the lower portion of the rear wall of the Satghara cave in Khandagiri, Bhuvaneswar. They consist of seven female figures guarded by Gaṇeśa. They are variously depicted, ten-armed, four-armed and two-armed. The first five have a bearing on the concepts of Brāhmaṇī, Vaiṣṇavī, Indrāṇī, Māheśvarī and Kaumārī, as is indicated by the attending animals—swan, elephant, bull, peacock, etc. All of them, with the exception of number one are on lotus seats, in the *ardhaparyanka* or *lalitāsana* posture. Numbers four, five and seven carry a small child in their arms. The sixth and seventh stand respectively for Padmāvatī and Ambikā. The former, like her spiritual father, the Jina Pārśvanātha, is associated with snakes and her Hindu or popular counterpart is the folk-goddess Manasā, one of whose names is also Padmāvatī or Padmā. We have already referred to the fact that B.C. Bhattacharya has described them, excepting the fifth one that could not be identified by him, as Cakreśvarī, Ajitadevī, Duritāri or Parjñapti, Gaurī or Mānavā, Padmāvatī and Ambikā.

Of the goddesses of early Buddhism we have already had the occasion to refer to Hārītī. From the evidence furnished by the Buddhist texts, it appears that she was originally the tutelary deity of the people of Magadha and later became the Buddhist protectress of children. Hiuen Tsang tells us about her worship in ancient Gandhāra, and refers to the Hārītī-stūpa said to have been erected by Aśoka. This Stūpa was identified by Foucher with Sare-Makhe-dheri in the Peshawar district. Her worship migrated to China, Korea and Japan in a somewhat modified form. In China, she was absorbed by Tārā or Kwan-yin, Avalokiteśvara in female aspect. In Japan, she came to possess both the forms of a saint (Koyasu Kwan-non) and an ogress (Kishi-mo-jin). Her cult was very popular in the north-west of India. Numerous sculptures, sometimes depicting her singly along with her children, or at other times in the company of her consort Kubera, known also as Pañcika, and her playing children, have been discovered in course of excavations. In the second chapter while dealing with the protectresses of children, we had referred to sculptural representations of Hārītī. Images

of Hārītī have been found in abundance from Sirpur in Madhya Pradesh, Takht-i-Bahi in Gandhāra region, Sankaram in Andhra Pradesh, Ratnagiri in Orissa and various other sites. The Patna Museum has a good collection of the Hārītī images in stone and metal which include two images from Mathura belonging to the second century A.D., one single and another with her consort Pañcika, one from Banaras belong to the second and third century, one from Saran, and a few others. The one from Saran is shown seated with the right leg pendant. A child is shown on her left leg and flying Vidyādharas on the top of the stele. This eleventh century image is made of black stone. Another inscribed bronze image of this goddess belonging to the Kurkihar hoard is preserved in the Patna Museum. It belongs to the twelfth century. The goddess is shown seated with a child on left lap. Her right hand is on the knee with a fruit.[86] The Banpur hoard of bronze images, now in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, contains five images of Hārītī, each of them being shown seated on lotus pedestal carrying a child on her left lap in the local fashion. Some medieval reliefs of Hārītī have also been found in Bengal.

Elsewhere, we have remarked that the earlier phases of Buddhism were more or less free from the representations of gods and goddesses, but scenes from the Buddha's life and Jātaka stories were given preference. Such scenes and stories are found represented in stone at Sanchi, Bharhut, Bodh Gaya and other places. In the Gandhāra school, where we come across definite cult images besides the representations of the Buddha, we have those of Jambhala, Kubera, Indra, Maitreya, Hārītī and others. In the Mathura school, which extended to the early Gupta period, we have numerous Buddha and Bodhisattva images along with those of Kubera, the Yakṣas and Nāgas, but here traces of a definite Buddhist cult of female principle are absent. It comes into vogue in the Magadha school which includes the images found in Sarnath, Nalanda, Odantapuri, Kurkihar, Gaya and other ancient cities of Bihar. The Magadha school is characterized by its wide variety of images of different types of Buddhist goddesses. The greatest manifestation of the Buddhist cult of the Female Principle is met with in the Bengal school which was the centre of Vajrayāna. The Javanese art seems to have been profoundly

influenced by the Bengal school, and the images of the gods and goddesses as found in the Borobodur temple show that they were acquainted with many deities of the Vajrayāna panthcon.

A good number of sculptural representations testifying to the popularity of the Buddhist goddess Tārā are found in the caves of Western Deccan, such as Ellora, Aurangabad, Kanheri, Nasik and other places and also at Sirpur in Madhya Pradesh, but very few of them can be chronologically assigned to a period earlier than the sixth century A.D. In the subsequent history of Buddhism, this goddess assumed numerous forms, and some of the varieties occur in sculptures, in stone and bronze, conforming to the *dhyānas*, at Nalanda, Bodhgaya, Kurkihar, various localities of Bengal and Orissa, Salihundam, Amaravati and Nagapattinam. Images of Khadirvanī Tārā, also known as Śyāmatārā, have been recovered from different sites of India. A beautiful statuette in the Baroda Museum shows the goddess in the *lalita* attitude. The Indian Museum of Calcutta has a few interesting standing figures of this goddess. The one from Mahoba is in a seated cross-legged posture. In the extant medieval representations of this variety of Tārā, sometimes curious miniature figures of eight goddesses or eight illustrative scenes are found carved on the *prabhāvalī* or either side of the principal deity. One such image in the collection of the Dacca Museum shows this feature. On an image of Tārā, originally, hailing from Ratnagiri in Cuttack district, Orissa, we find other features which collectively stand for the 'eight great fears' from which she saves her devotees. In the Patna Museum, there are a few bronze and stone images of this goddess. The entire bronze collection of the Kurkihar hoard belong to Patna Museum. The Nalanda bronzes are mainly in the Indian Museum of Calcutta, and partly in the Patna and the site museum of Nalanda. In many cases, these metal images are inscribed. In one of the Kurkihar bronze images, she is shown standing in the *dvibhaṅga* or slight bend position. In another, she stands in *samapādasthānaka* with the female attendants carrying *cāmara*, breast decorated with creeper designs incised. A third variety shows her eight-armed, wearing a high *jaṭāmukuṭa*, and seated in a slight *bhaṅga* poṣe. The fourth one is Śyāmatārā, a seated figure with lotus stalk in the left hand.

This type is more frequent. From Kurkihar figurines, at least one of Sitatārā can be identified. Metal images from Nalanda include a figure on Dhanada-tārā, seated cross-legged, four-armed, the right upper of which holds a rosary, lower in the *varada* pose, while the upper left holds a lotus and the lower a cuplike object. It belongs to c. 10th century A.D. Of the stone images of the Patna Museum, a few of the Pāla period are fragmentary. A complete figure of Khadiravani Tārā, hailing from Hilsa, near Patna, shows the goddess in *lalitāsana*. The right hand with *varada-mudrā* rests on the right knee and the left hand holds a lotus. She is accompanied by Ekajaṭā and Aśokakāntā Mārīcī. Two images of the same goddess from Orissa have been presented in one of which she is seated with her right leg pendant on a great lotus while in another she is accompanied by the aforesaid deities and seated in *lalitāsaṇa*. She has her hair dressed in a low chignon, is clad with *uttarīya* and loin cloth and wears full and delicate jewellery. All these Tārā images can be collectively dated between the ninth and twelfth centuries.

In an Indian Museum statuette of Mahāśrī Tārā, she is shown as one-faced and two-armed, exhibiting the *vyākhyāna* or *dharmacakra* mudrā. To her left is Ekajaṭā sitting in the *ardha-paryaṅka* attitude. To her right sits Aśokakāntā Mārīci who wears a jewelled crown, and carries the *vajra* and *aśoka* flower. The statuette also depicts Jāṅguli towards the extreme left of the deity and a small figure of Mahāmāyūrī to the extreme right. This Indian Museum image seems to be the only image representing Mahāśrī Tārā where the sculpture is in complete accordance with the description found in the iconological texts. Images of Vajratārā are found almost everywhere in India. She is also popular in Nepal. In the Chinese collection of statuettes of Peiping, an image of Vajratārā is found under the title Aṣṭabhūjā Vajratārā. This goddess should be, according to the iconological description, eight-armed and four-faced and in the midst of the circle of Eight Mothers.[87] The Indian Museum bronze of Vajratārā from Patharghata is in the form of a lotus, and represents the complete *maṇḍala* or circle with all the attendant deities. The petals are eight in number, each bearing the image of an attendant deity. An Orissan image of this goddess has been recovered from Mavurbhani which is

four-faced and eight-armed, the four right hands containing *vajra*, noose, arrow and conch and the four left lotus, bow, goad and raised *tarjani*. A similar image of the goddess has been found at Sarasvatīsthāna close to the Svayambhū temple in Nepal. A beautiful Tārā image belonging to c. 11th century, recovered from Jajpur, now in the Orissa State Museum, presents the goddess as seated in *rājalīlāsana* showing *vyākhyāna mudrā* in right hand and a lotus stalk in the left. The Banpur hoard contains eleven bronze images of Tārā in *lalitāsana* carrying lotus in left hand and exhibiting *varadamudrā* in the right. The ornamentations show anklets on the feet, bracelets in the hand, necklace in neck and tapering *mukuṭas* on the crest. Stylistically these images may be compared to the Tārā images of Ratnagiri, Jairampur, Jajpur and other places of Orissa. From the ruins of the Somapura monastery, i.e., Paharpur in North Bengal, more than fifty terracotta plaques have been discovered which contain eight-armed images of Tārā.

The cult of Tara in her various forms was strong in Eastern India. She is sometimes described in the *sadhanās* as being of terrific appearance, four-armed, standing in the *pratyālīḍha* pose on a corpse, and holding a sword, a chopper, a lotus and a skull in her hands and a miniature figure of Akṣobhya within the crown of chignon (*ekajaṭā*) on her head. The iconological trait of *ekajaṭā* of Tārā gave rise to the conception of the goddess Ekajaṭā, and the cult of this new goddess became popular in Bhoṭa (Tibet). According to tradition, Ārya Nāgārjuna recovered the Ekajaṭā cult from Bhoṭa. Images of Ekajaṭā are found in almost all Buddhist countries of the North. She is known in Tibet as well as in China. Iconologically, she is of blue colour, with one face and three eyes, having a tiger-skin round her loin and brown hair piled upwards on her head. She may be two, four or eight-armed. The Indian Museum collection has her two-armed image, each arm holding the *kartari* and the *karota* (skull-cup) respectively.

Kurukullā and Bhṛkuṭi are emanations of Amitābha. The former is one-faced and may have two, four, six or eight arms. When six-armed, she bears the images of five Dhyānī Buddhas on her crest. When two-armed, she is called Śukla Kurukullā and when four-armed, she is called by the names of Tārodbhava,

Uḍḍīyāna, Hevajrakrama, Kalpokta, etc. Two bronze images of Kurukullā have been identified from the Banpur hoard, now in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar. One of them is in a sitting posture, six-armed, three-faced, and three-eyed. The lower right hand is in the *abhaya mudrā*, the middle holds a *vajra* and the upper an arrow, while the left hands from the lower to upper, a stalk of lotus, a noose and a bow respectively. The other belongs to the Uḍḍīyāna Kurukullā variety. It is fierce in form and has the garland of skulls stretching to the waist. The image is four-handed, the left pper hand holds a bow, lower a stalk of lotus while the right upper holds an arrow and the lower a goad. She is in the *ardhaparyaṅka* pose, dancing on a corpse. The hair of her head rises above in the shape of a flame.

Bhṛkuṭi, often regarded as a form of Tārā, is conceived as four-armed, one-faced and yellow in colour, three-eyed, and as showing *varada mudrā* and rosary in two right hands and *tridaṇḍī* and *kamaṇḍalu* in two left. Cave No. 10 of Ellora contains an image of this goddess which may be assigned to c. 7th century A.D. A four-armed Bhṛkuṭi has been recovered from Salihundan in Andhra Pradesh. A four-armed standing bronze image of Bhṛkuṭi, belonging to the ninth century, from Nalanda is preserved in the Patna Museum. Her upper left hand holds the branches of a tree, upper right hand a rosary, lower left hand a *kamaṇḍalu* and lower right an indistinct object. In front of the pedestal are two *makaras* shown rising towards the deity.[88]

Of other Buddhist goddesses, Parṇaśabarī is of great iconographic interest. Two extant images of this goddess found in East Bengal closely follow the textual description.[89] The *sādhanās* describe her as three-faced, six-armed standing in *pratyāḷīḍha* pose and clad in leaf garments. The two aforesaid images from Eastern Bengal, discovered in Dacca district by Bhattasali,[90] have the effigies of Amoghasiddhi on the crown. They are characterized by an angry laugh and protruding belly. To the right and left are two divinities, Hayagrīva and Śītalā, the Hindu god of fever and goddess of small-pox. The prostrate figure under the feet are the diseases and pestilences in human shape. A mutilated image of Parnaśabarī is in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. With three faces and six arms,

trampling upon Gaṇeśa and with Akṣobhya on the crown, it represents her as the protectress from calamities (*vighnas*). The Patna Museum has a good collection of the images of this goddess. From Kurkihar, at least seven bronze images of this goddess are found. One of them shows her seated on a single lotus throne on a high rectangular pedestal. The right leg is pendant and rests on a small figure of Gaṇeśa. The lower right hand is in the *varada* posture and lower left is pendant of the left knee leaning against a stock of plant. Her upper right hand holds a *vajra* and the left a *pāśa*. In another, the four-armed goddess is seated cross-legged wearing a *karaṇḍa-mukuṭa*. Her upper right hand holds an arrow, upper left a bow and the lower left a stalk of lotus. The lower right is in the *varada* posture. The third figure is seated in *Vajraparyaṅka*, her lower right hand being in *abhaya mudrā*. There is no need of describing four other figures of this goddess. All these figures of the Patna Museum have been assigned to between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

Vasudhārā, the consort of Jambhala, is the Buddhist counterpart of the Brahmanical Vasundharā, Pṛthivī or Bhūdevī, the consort of Viṣṇu. Several stone and metal images of this goddess, both single and in the company of her consort have been discovered in the north and east of India. The Baroda Museum contains a beautiful bronze image of this goddess which represents her as one-faced and six-armed and as sitting in the *lalita* attitude. In her three right hands she exhibits the *namaskāra* pose, the *varada* pose and ears of corns. The first left hand has a book, the second ears of corn and the third on the lap carries a vessel containing jewels. She accompanies Uccuṣma in a Sarnath image. In another image from Sarnath, which is much mutilated, she is represented as standing. The Vasudhārā of Kancipuram like the Tārā and Bhṛkuṭi Tārā of Potalaka was once a celebrated deity. Images of Vasudhārā have been recovered from Nagapattinam, Ratnagiri and Khiching. The Patna Museum contains a figure of this goddess from Nalanda which in the *varada mudrā* is seated on a pedestal. Her right foot rests on a vessel and the left hand holds a stalk of corn flower. It belongs to the tenth century. Four Kurkihar bronzes of the same goddess belonging from the tenth to the twelfth century are preserved in the same

museum. One of them shows her four-armed, seated on a great lotus. Her right hand is extended laterally inward and the lower right with *varada* on the knee. The lower left hand is with the lotus. Like the preceding one, it is also inscribed. The second one in the left hand holds a staff. The right hand contains a fruit. A boy's figure is in a separate projection on a seat. The third figure is a seated one in *lalitāsana* with right leg pendant and resting on an upturned vase. The left hand is raised with a sheaf of corn and the right is in *varada* pose. The fourth one is fragmentary, but inscribed. A good number of Vasudhārā images from Nalanda in bronze, characterized by *Varadamudrā* and a stalk of corn flower are preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Nairātmā, one of whose images is preserved in the Indian Museum, resembles the Śākta Kālī. She is shown dancing on a corpse, holding a short sword and a skull cup in her two hands. Her face looks terrible, and she carries a *kartri* in the right hand and bears the *khatvāṅga* which hangs from her left shoulder. The Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum of Calcutta has also a bronze image of her which shows the same characteristics, but the *khatvāṅga* is lost.

Nairātmā is the *Śakti* of Heruka in whose union the latter assumes the form of Hevajra. A fine and well-executed image of Heruka in *Yab-yum* with his *Śakti*, found at Murshidabad is now in a private collection of Calcutta.[91] A similar image, partly damaged, was found at Paharpur.

Aparājitā is an interesting Buddhist goddess. She tramples upon Gaṇeśa and one of her hands is raised in the attitude of dealing a slap, while her parasol is held by important Brahmanical deities. A fragmentary image of Aparājitā is found at Nālandā which shows only the lower half of the full image. The upper part is lost, but the lower part is shown as trampling upon Gaṇapati which has helped to identify the goddess in terms of her iconological description. The identification is confirmed with the discovery of the Indian Museum image of the same goddess. The image is slightly mutilated but is complete and resembles the Nalanda fragment in the lower portion. The Patna Museum contains two images of Aparājitā in buff sandstone, belonging to the seventh or eighth century A.D., one from Banaras and the other from Pachar, Gaya,

which correspond to the aforesaid iconological description. An Aparājitā image has also been found at Ratnagiri in Orissa.

Cundā is another important Buddhist goddess who is of white colour, one face, and two, four, sixteen, eighteen and twenty-six arms with the recognition symbol—book-on-lotus. Foucher referred to a sixteen-armed figure of Cundā installed in Paṭṭikera (Mainamati, Tippera District, Bangladesh) on the basis of a miniature painting of the sixteen-armed Cundā on a *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript (No. Add. 1643) of the Cambridge University Library. The Baroda Museum has one such sixteen-armed in octo-alloy. Another sixteen-armed image of this goddess is in the Mohant's possession at Bodh Gaya. From Niyamatpur in Rajsahi district, North Bengal, an eighteen-armed figure of this goddess has been discovered.[92] The Patna Museum contains one eighteen-armed Cundā image in bronze from Nalanda which belongs to c. 7th century A.D.[93]

An image of a three-faced and eight-handed goddess seated in the *vīrāsana* pose with Gaṇeśa carved on the pedestal and Amitābha in its crown found at Bhawanipur, Dacca, and now in Dacca Sāhitya Parisat, has been identified by Bhaṭṭasali with a form of Bhṛkuṭi Tārā, but it has a great similarity to an image of a goddess tentatively identified with Mahāpratisarā which is in Dacca Museum.[94] B.T. Bhattacharyya has, however, identified both these figures with Mahāpratisarā.[95] The metal image of an eight-handed goddess, originally found in Tippera, and now in the Dacca Museum, has been tentatively identified with Sitātapatrā. It belongs to c. 9th century A.D.[96] A few Vāgīśvarī images have been discovered in different parts of Bengal.[97] An old specimen of Ārya Sarasvatī, belonging to c. 7th century A.D. is met with at Ellora. The Orissan site of Ratnagiri has also yielded this form of the goddess. A statuette of Vajravārāhī, with symbols of *kartari* and *kapāla* and *ardhaparyaṅka* posture of dancing, is in the Baroda Museum.

Several images of Mārīci have been found in eastern and northern India who is usually depicted as three-faced and eight-armed and attended by four goddesses—Varthali, Vadali, Varali and Varāhamukhi. Special mention should be made in this connection to the eight-armed Mārīci, now in Lucknow Museum, which was originally found at Sarnath. Two tenth

century images of Mārīci are in Patna Museum. One of them is on a round pedestal with seven pigs and the other is on a chariot drawn by seven boars.[98] A six-armed Mārīci has been discovered at Salihundun in Andhra Pradesh. The Baripada Museum contains an eight-handed Mārīci carrying in her right hands a needle, a goad, arrow and a *vajra* and in the left hands a string, a noose, a bow and a branch of an *aśoka* tree. Of her three heads, one is that of a sow. Her chariot is drawn by seven pigs, the charioteer being Rāhu. This image has been assigned to c. 11th century A.D. Exactly the same image is found in a Nalanda bronze, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The figures of Mārīci were popular in Orissa. The typical life-size image of Mārīci of Ajodhya in Balasore district—three-faced, three-eyed and eight-armed—corresponding to the aforesaid description, deserves special mention. The Banpur hoard contains two bronze images of Mārīci.

One of the finest images of Prajñāpāramitā, originally hailing from Java, is now in the collection of the Leyden Museum.[99] It bears the image of Akṣobhya on the *Jaṭāmukuṭa* and the two hands display the *vyākhyāna* attitude. The Indian Museum image is also of the same type, but the hands are lost. Two bronze images of Prajñāpāramitā from Kurkihar are in Patna Museum. One of them is on high *trirtha* pedestal. It is four-armed. The upper right carries a rosary and the upper left a lotus with book. The lower right is in the *varada* posture and the lower left rests on the lap with a small round object. The Nalanda collection of Patna Museum contains four Prajñāpāramitā images in bronze, all in *vajrāsana* and on lotus pedestals, four-armed, holding in two upper hands a rosary and a book on a stalk of lotus and in the lower hands a bowl and *varada mudrā*.[100] The site museum of Nalanda also contains five bronze images of the same type. A most artistic specimen of Uṣṇiṣavijayā belongs to the Indian Museum, Calcutta. She is three-faced, three-eyed, youthful and decked in many ornaments. Her four right hands display the *viśvavaj. a*, Buddha on lotus, the arrow and the *varada* pose and the four left hands show the bow, the noose, the *abhaya* pose and the water vessel. An eighteen-armed image of Pratyaṅgirā from Nalanda is in Patna Museum. Two hands of the goddess are in *dharmacakra mudrā*, the upper left holding a pot and the

upper right a rosary. The remaining hands hold different articles.

Notes

1. James, *CMG*, 13-15.
2. *Ibid.*, 21-32.
3. Childe, *NLMAE*, 179 ff.
4. Stein, *ATWNB*, 38 ff; *ATG*, 37 ff.
5. Saraswati, *SIC*, 8-9.
6. Marshall, *MIC*, I. 48 ff., 341; Mackay, *FEM*, I. 260 f., 349; Vats, *EH*, 292.
7. Majumdar, *ES*, 38, 68.
8. Marshall, *MIC*, I. 50.
9. James, *CMG*, 39-40.
10. Evans, *PM*, I. 45 ff; 500 ff; Nilson, *MMR*, 309 ff.
11. James, *CMG*, 42-46; *PR*, 165-71.
12. Sankalia *ILN*, Aug. 1971, 42.
13. Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, 42.
14. Bloch in *ASIAR*, 1906-07, 122 ff; Bachhofar, *EIS*, I. 14-15.
15. Rowland, *AAI*, 23.
16. Ray, *MSA*, 6.
17. Desai, *ESI*, 11-12.
18. *IAR*, 1963-64, 8 pl. Va.
19. *PMCA*, 167 ff.
20. Barua, *B*, II, 70 ff; Banerjea, *DHI*, 368-70.
21. *IAR*, 1954-55, 15, pl. XXVI. a.
22. Desai in *NRRFV*, 177-204.
23. Allan, *CCAI*, 129-39, 148-58, 252.
24. *Ibid.*, 131 ff; Whitehead, *PMC*, I. 135.
25. *PMC*, I. 100-01, 122.
26. *BMC*, 70-71, 79.
27. *ASIAR*, 1914-15. 29-30.
28. *EA*, I. 175 ff.
29. Allan, *CCAI*, 159, 169-91, 194 ff., 210 ff.
30. Banerjea, *DHI*, 108 ff.
31. Mukherjee, *NL*, 16-17. 52-53.
32. *ASIAR*, 1910-11, 16.
33. *Ibid.*, 1927-28, 66; Marshall, *MIC*, I. 62-63; Banerjea, *DHI*, 158 ff.
34. Marshall, *GT*, 59.
35. *ASIAR*, 1922-23, X. b.
36. *ASIAR*, 1903-04, 71-77, 133; 1911-12, 107, 133; Majumdar, *GSIM*, II, 100; Hargreaves, *HSPM*, 44, 50; Marshall, *BAG*, 84.
37. Smith *JASM*, 56, pl. XCVIV.
38. *ASIAR*, 1903-04, 107 ff; 1911-12, 52 ff; 1913-14, 129. ff; *MASI*, No. 66; Banerjea, *DHI*, 194 ff.

39. See Altekar, *CIC*, IV. 31.
40. *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 51.
41. *Ibid.*, 76.
42. *CII*. III. 266.
43. Banerjea, *DHI*, 471.
44. *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 161 ff.
45. *JI*, 24 ff.
46. Zimmer, *AIA*, I. 83.
47. *Lalit Kalā*, No. 8, pl. XXVI. 23.
48. See especially *Artibus Asiae*, XXI (2), 123-30.
49. XX. 34-35.
50. Srivastava, *CGGGJM*, 5.
51. *JUPHS*, (OS), XXII, 158-59; *Artibus Asiae* XXXI. 180.
52. *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 86, pl. XXXI. 13-14.
53. *SII*, XII, No. 106.
54. *Ibid.*, III, No. 205.
55. *Arts Asiatiqua*, 1964, 44-65.
56. *JBRS*, XLI (I), 1-12.
57. Majumdar (ed), *HB*, I. 453-54.
58. *RWVRM*, 1969, Sircar, *RLAMI*, 236.
59. Banerjea. *DHI*, 469, pl. XXXIX, 2.
60. *Ibid.*, 468, pl. XXVII. 3.
61. *ARSIE*, 1917 No. 335.
62. *PMCA*, 71-72, 95, 153.
63. *ASIAR*, 1903-04, 107 ff.
64. *Ibid.*, 1911-12, 52 ff.
65. See under Buddhist and Jain goddesses.
66. *DHI*, 378.
67. Bhattasali *IBBSDM*, 188-90. pl. LXIII.
68. Banerjea, *DHI*, 505-06.
69. *PMCA*, 94-95.
70. *EI*, XXVIII, 184-85.
71. Majumdar (ed.), *HB*, I. 455.
72. *JMU*, XXXII, 154-56.
73. *ARSIE*, 1909, No. 795.
74. *Ibid.*, 1911, No. 316; *SII* No. 191.
75. LVII. 37 ff.
76. III. 85.71-72.
77. *JRASB*, (L), XVI, 247-51, pl. XII.
78. *IBBSDM*, 192-94.
79. *ASIAR*, 1924-25, 155.
80. *DHI*, 509.
81. ARSIE, 1919, No. 207, SII, II, Nos. 79, 81.
82. *ASIAR*, 1915-16, 18.
83. Barua, *B*. II, 75.
84. Smith, *JSAM*, 56-57, pl. XCIX.
85. Shah, *SJA*, 17, 25, 28, 31.
86. *PMCA*, 22, 26, 95, 152.

87. Cf. Bhattasali, *IBBSDM*, 45-53, XV-XVIII.
88. *PMCA*, 122, pl. XXV.
89. Banerji, *EISMS*, pl. XXXIX.
90. *IBBSDM*, 58 f. XXIII.
91. Majumdar (ed.) *HB*, 471, pl. XXI. 54.
92. *Ibid.*, 473, pl. XXVI. 64.
93. *PMCA*, 123, pl. XXVI.
94. *IBBSDM*, 45-56, 61-62, pls. XIX, XXIV.
95. *IBI*, 243-244, Figs. 184-85.
96. Majumdar (ed.), *HB*, 473, pl. LXIII. 152.
97. *Ibid.*, 474, pl. XXVII. 66.
98. *PMCA*, 65-66.
99. Havell *ISP*, pl. XIV.
100. *PMCA*, 122.

Mother Goddess and the Advanced Religious Systems

MOTHER GODDESS AND CHRISTIANITY

> With the rise of agriculture and domestication of animals as the figure of the goddess became more clearly defined, and with the growing of consciousness of the duality of the male and female in the generative process, from being Unmarried Mother personifying the divine principle in maternity she became associated with the Young God as her son and consort. While she remained the dominant figure, the cult assumed a two-fold aspect in the seasonal drama in which both partners in procreation played their respective roles, until ultimately, after the syncretic Magna Mater had emerged, it acquired a mystical and theological content in Christendom. Then it was interpreted in terms of the Church as the Mater Ecclesia, and the Virgin Mother of the incarnate son of God as the Madonna.[1]

In fact, a good deal of our information regarding the pre-Christian rites and conceptions comes from the Christian sources. The conception of Mater Ecclesia and the beliefs and rituals clustering round her, as well as the Marian festivals like the Purification, Nativity, Conception, etc., belong to the pre-Christian period and these have been adopted in Christianity by adding new significance. But side by side, it must be admitted that the dualism in the conceptions of Mater Ecclesia or the Marian cults cannot be explained merely in terms of the survival of an outworn relic of paganism. That

would be an over-simplified approach. It should be remembered in this connection that there is nothing more complex in the religious history of the world than Christian theology, and to define all the Christian conceptions is a matter of proverbial difficulty.

The theme of the death and resurrection of Christ may have some bearing on that of Adonis, Attis or Osiris, but it is a matter of subjective speculation. Historically, however, it may be said that the missionary enterprise of the Early Church was particularly active in Asia Minor where the cult of the Magna Mater was very influential and deeply laid, as a result of which the cults and conceptions of the early Gnostic sects were saturated with the existing elements of the cult of the Phrygian Mother. The Female Principle was identified with the conception of the Holy Ghost and a complex female-oriented cosmological mythology was invented. In its setting and techniques, early Gnosticism was essentially Phrygian, deeply rooted in the orgiastic antecedents centred in the worship of Cybele.[2] The May Day celebrations were also of Phrygian origin in which Cybele reappeared in the guise of the May Queen with Attis as the Green Man.

The mystical conception of Mater Ecclesia which characterized the early history of Christianity derived its main impulses from the existing cults of the Magna Mater. According to some scholars, the conception of Mater Ecclesia rested on the primitive identification of temples or shrines with the Mother Goddess. In Western Asia (and also in India) the belief was widespread that the temple itself was the Mother Goddess, and the inner chamber into which the deity was installed was her womb. In Christian theology, however, the Church is a different thing. Outwardly, the name applies to religious buildings, but it is conceived as the congregation as well as the venue, inseparably identified with each other, and from the sophisticated viewpoint, it is the congregation of mind, one in all, often identified with the human body itself. In any case, evidently from some primitive belief, the early Christian thinkers conceived the Church as the Bride of Christ, standing in a marital relationship with each other, although there was a difference of opinion among the early Christian writers regarding the true nature of this relationship. Thus, according

to some authority, the Church was the Second Eve, the Mother of spiritual life generated by the second Adam, Christ, while others held that the Church was an undefiled virgin and at the same time a loving mother, merged in the body of Christ. This nuptial element, the conception of Mater Ecclesia as the Bride as well as the body of Christ, and also the idea of the Motherhood of the Virgin Church conceiving children through the natural process of parturition, remained an integral feature of Catholic mysticism.[3]

The influence of the cult of the Magna Mater on the early Church was primarily on the conception of the Mater Ecclesia rather than that of the Madonna. But the popular emotion, which was traditionally linked with the cult of the Great Mother, was not satisfied with the mystic conception of Mater Ecclesia, and this led to the widespread cult of the Virgin Mary. W.M. Ramsey argues that as early as the fifth century, the honour paid to the Virgin Mary at Ephesus was the recrudescence in a baptized form of the old pagan worship of the Virgin Mother.[4] This does not, however, mean that the cult of Mary was merely a Christianized version of the pre-Christian Mother Goddess. It was a complex growth behind which, as a matter of fact, the recognition and veneration of maternity as a divine principle must have been a driving force. The cult of Virgin Mary was adopted by the Gnostic Ophite sects, but it was not recognized by the early Christian writers.

> The body of Mary is holy but she is not God. She may be honoured but should not be worshipped.[5]

The popularity of the cult of Mary began with the dedication of churches to her in Rome (e.g., Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Maria Trastevere, Santa Maria Antiqua, etc.) from the fourth century onwards. It was further stimulated by the Christological controversies, until at length in the Middle Ages, she was represented as the final glory of the Mystical body of Christ, the Church, the Mediatrix in the process of redemption and the Queen of Heaven.[6] She became the Perpetual Virgin, Mother of God, the Woman clothed with the Sun, having the Moon under her feet and a Crown of twelve Stars on her head, the Lily of Eden, the Second Eve, the Star of the Sea, the

Compassionate Mother, the Bestower of Grace, the Lady of Victory—quite different from the simple, wholly dedicated, peasant maiden of Nazareth.

From the spiritual and orthodox position it was held (i) that Jesus being the eternal son of God, became man, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary and (ii) that inasmuch as *he* is thus God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever, so is *she*, *his* Mother, truly and properly described *Theotokos* and *Virgo Deipara*—the Mother of Our Lord and God, who was God when *he* issued from her virgin womb, wearing the *manhood* which of *her* substance has been prepared for *him*, which *he* had taken to himself, which *he* carried with *him* to the cross. These things are part and parcel of the faith of the whole Catholic Church. Thus, the historian has to enquire (i) what might be inferred from these in the Apostolic and early ages of the Church as to the duty of the Christians towards the Virgin Mother of the Lord, (ii) when and how the widespread developments of her cult arose and (iii) the grounds on which these developments have been justified and accepted by the adherents of the faith.

In the New Testament and the earliest Christian writings like those of Didache, Clement of Rome, Harmas, Polycarp, Tatian, etc., we have practically nothing of Mariology. It was not until the post-Apostolic period, from the second century onwards, that the Marian cult began to be formulated and gradually took shape in Christian tradition. It was in reaction to Gnostic Docetism in which the human character of Christ was denied, just as that of the Buddha was denied by the Mahāyānists, that she was brought in relation to Eve by Justin[7] and Irenaeus[8] and came to be looked upon as the generatrix of spiritual life, just as the bride of Adam was the generatrix of material life. The role played by the Blessed Virgin in the work of Incarnation and Redemption was one of the principal contentions in the prolonged controversies of the formative period of the Early Church, when on the one hand the divinity, and on the other the human character, of Christ were being denied. It was out of this controversy that the title *Theotokos*, Mother of God, was conferred upon her at the council of Ephesus in A.D. 431.[9]

The title *Theotokos*, i.e., God-bearer or Mother of God, was

itself a logical deduction from the dogma of the full divinity of Christ. This dogma was fully established by the end of the fourth century among different sections of the Church. Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, however, objected to the use of the title *Theotokos*, preferring the less explicit title *Christokos*, because it appeared to him that the supporters of the former title had confounded the divine and the human in Christ, but his objections were condemned by the aforesaid council, and *Theotokos* was unconditionally approved and received a wide welcome in Eastern Christendom. Through its incorporation in the Ava Maria, the title 'Mother of God' had been circulated throughout Western Catholicism. This title was also able to find a place in the theology even of Orthodox Protestantism by the approval it received in both Lutherian and reformed confessions during the period of the Reformation.[10]

The title *Theotokos* gave theological expression of the growing devotion to the Virgin as the Mother of God, especially in the East. It also became one of the favourite subjects for icon painters. The earlier portraits show a conventional representation of the Madonna, depicting her standing erect, holding the Holy Child on her left arm, or as an Orante with extended arms interceding for the faithful. In the St. Maria Maggiore of Rome, we have her mosaic representation, seated on a chair with winged angels in attendance. When churches began to be dedicated to her honour from the fourth century onwards, she was depicted as enthroned in the manner and likeness of Isis and wearing the mural crown of Cybele, with the Holy Child on her breast.[11] Usually she is shown seated on a throne hold ing the Holy Child forward. By the sixth century, Madonna had become a standard product of art in Christendom. With the dedication of Churches to her honour, her office and functions tended to increase so that she became not only the patroness of churches, but also the protectress of every type with numerous titles and epithets suggestive of her functions.

The Marian festivals are also of great importance. 15 August is observed by both Eastern and Western Churches as the principal feast of Mary. (The date, however, is not the same in all places.) The feast commemorates her death (whence the name Dorm tion. Falling Asleep) and especially her *taking-up*

(Assumption) into heaven. The feast originated in the East and came to Rome through Byzantine influence about the middle of the seventh century under the name of 'Falling Asleep of the Mother of God'. This general 'Commemoration of the Mother of God' had been transformed into a specific 'Commemoration of the Falling Asleep' during the last part of the sixth century under the influence of *Transitus Mariae*, a fifth century religious work. At Rome, the name 'Dormition' or 'Falling Asleep' gave way before long to a new title that was to prevail in the West, 'The Assumption', which at first meant hardly more than *death* or *passing* but which in time came to imply a resurrection. When the Roman rite spread through the West during the ninth century, the new feast went with it, although there was some opposition to the full implication of the name by which it had become known. By the end of the Middle Ages, the feast was everywhere celebrated as one of the greatest in the year and the doctrine was universally accepted. The next important Marian festival is the Annunciation, the feast of which is celebrated on 25 March. It is the announcement made by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary of the incarnation of Christ.[12] The first authentic allusions to the feast (apart from the Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries, in both of which it is mentioned) are the acts of the council of Toledo (A.D. 656) and of the Trullan council (A.D 692). The festival of the Purification of Virgin Mary, commonly called Candlemas, is of Eastern origin, and symbolizes the meeting of Christ with Simeon and Anna. In the West, however, it is the Purification of Mary according to Jewish custom.[13] Cedranus, the eleventh century historian, assigns the institution of the festival to the Emperor Justin of Constantinople in the year 526, and it was in the reign of his successor Justinian, in 541, that it became established on 2 February, after the Feast of the Nativity had been transferred to 25 December under Latin influence in Byzantium. Besides these, there are also the Feasts of the Nativity and of the Conception.

According to E.O. James, in these Marian festivals, relics of the earlier festivals of the Mother Goddess are to be found abundantly. Behind the Purification or Candlemas festival, the symbolism of the Feast of Lights lay the ancient perambulations associated with the return of the goddess from the

underworld and the rebirth of nature in the spring. In the Elusinian rites, lighted torches were carried in commemoration of the search of Demeter for Kore. Again, in the Lesser Mysteries at Agrai, when Kore was supposed to return from the underworld in the young corn and bring with her lengthening days, a procession with torches took place in celebration of the return of life and light after the death and darkness of the year's decline. In Christianity, Mary came into greater prominence as the light-bearer, since the sacred light became a symbol of the Holy Child who was declared to be the 'light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel'. It therefore appears that the candle ritual was derived from the ancient torch and light symbolism, which was brought into conjunction with that of the Virgin Mother, presenting herself in the Temple with her divine son.

Likewise, the Feast of the Nativity is likely to be a Christian adaptation of the pagan observance of the winter solstice, when the rebirth of the sun takes place. Whatever may have been the cause, the selection of 25 December as the Feast of the Nativity has an obvious relation with the annual commemoration of the victory of light over darkness which is found in Mithraism. It was about the same date that in Egypt the Sun-god was born anew as Horus, son of Osiris, in the arms of Isis. At midnight on 25 December, the constellation of Virgo, symbolizing the Mother Goddess in Babylonia, gave birth to the life-giving sun. In the Balder myth, the avenger of the slain hero (Balder) appeared on the night of 24 December, rising amid universal rejoicing like the new-born sun to destroy the power of darkness.

> " 'The virgin has brought forth, light increases'—the ancient cry of the celebrant at midnight in Syria and Egypt—throughout the ages has been the theme of the Christmas mystery drama from the Eve of the Nativity to Candlemas. Around it has collected a miscellaneous accumulation of ancient customs and beliefs associated with the winter festival, but only those like the praesepe and the Feast of Lights that have been relevant to it, have been consecrated by the Church as an integral part of the observance. The rest have been condoned so long as they have not been out of keeping

with the annual commemoration of the Nativity of the son of Mary.''[14]

MOTHER GODDESS AND TAOISM

The rise of Taoism in China is associated with the name of Lao Tzu who is traditionally placed in the sixth century B.C. although some scholars[15] put him around 300 B.C. or 240 B.C. on the basis of the grammar and style of the *Tao-Te-king* attributed to him. The word *tao* in Chinese means 'road' or 'way' and *teh* 'power' or 'virtue'. Taoism maintains that all things originate and change due to their own 'way' or *tao*. Man should therefore adhere to the naturalness of things without striving. Of the subsequent exponents of Taoism, Yang Chu contended that by observing the natural laws of life (*tao*) man would 'preserve his nature intact', while Hsun Tsiang and Yin Wen believed that adherence to *tao* would yield every man wisdom and knowledge of the truth. Chuang Tzu blended his somewhat puerile materialistic world outlook with such idealistic conceptions as 'non-existence of objective truth', 'life being an illusion' and 'true being springing from the eternal and independently existing *tao*'. Subsequently, the rational philosophical ideas of Taoism were advanced in the works of Chinese materialists, such as Wang Chung and others.

Although Taoism began and expanded as a philosophic movement, in course of time it took the form of a distinct religion. This was probably due to the influence of Buddhism. From its very inception, Taoism had with it certain esoteric rituals and practices derived from the ideals of primitive community life, a return to which was always urged by the earlier exponents of Taoism who were opposed to domination and oppression of all types, social and political. However, with its growth as a specialized religion, Taoism developed an elaborate pantheon of its own. Some of the Taoist deities were nature and astral beings, others were adopted from Buddhism or invented in imagination. A few of them were deified human beings; Lao Tzu himself was elevated to the rank of a deity. At the head of the pantheon was the triad of the Three Pure Ones, evidently formed in imitation of the three *Kāyas* of the Buddha. They consisted of (i) Yuan Shih T'ien Tsun (or Yuan

Shih T'ien Wang, later merged with Yu Huang Shang Ti), the First Principle, (ii) Tao Chin, the controller of the opposite principles of Yin and Yang and (iii) Lao Tzu, who expounded the doctrine emanating from Honourable Tao.[16]

Something should also be said in this connection about the principles of Yin and Yang. These are basic concepts of Chinese philosophy shared in common by all schools including Confucianism. Originally, they served to express the Female and Male Principles in nature. Subsequently, they came to symbolize the interaction of the extreme, diametrical opposites. The doctrine of dualism of the Yin-Yang forces is an indispensable element of the Chinese philosophy. The harmonization of the ever-present Yang and Yin in one's own self became a definite aim of practical Taoism for the purpose of making man transcend his physical limitations by acquiring supernatural power and even immortality (Hsien) in his physical body. It should also be noted that these very ancient Chinese conceptions of the Male and Female Principles as working through everything in life and being—the Yang or the male or positive power and Yin the female or negative power—were extended in course of time from the domain of the purely mental and philosophical to the material or mundane in what may be called the physical sciences in China—Physics and Chemistry, Psychology and Sexology, Medicine and physical exercises of various kinds.

We shall see later that the Taoist and Tantric principles have much in common and that Chinese Taoism and Indian Tantricism have a genetic and historical relation. In the establishment of this relationship, Buddhism had evidently a significant part to play. The extent of the influence which Buddhism exerted on Taoism can be estimated if we take into account the following criticism of the Neo-Confucianist Chu Hsi (A.D. 1130-1200) offered against Buddhism and Taoism. Chu Hsi wrote:

> Taoism was at first confined to purity of life and to inaction. These were associated with long life and immortality, which by-and-by became the sole objects of the cult. Now-a-days, they have thought it advisable to adopt a system of magical incantations, and chiefly occupy themselves with exorcism and prayers for blessings. Thus, two radical changes have been made. The Taoists have the writings of Lao Tzu and

Chuang Tzu. They neglected these, and the Buddhists stole them for their own purposes; whereupon the Taoists went off and imitated the Sūtras of Buddhism. This is just as the scions of some wealthy house should be robbed of all their valuables and then go off and gather up the old pots and pans belonging to the thieves. Buddhist books are full of what Buddha said and Taoist books are similarly full of what Tao said. Now Buddha was a man, but how does Tao manage to talk? This belief, however, has prevailed for eight or nine centuries past. Taoism began with Lao Tzu. Its trinity of the Three Pure Ones is copied from the Trinity of the three persons as taught by Buddhism. By their Trinity the Buddhists mean (1) the spiritual body (of Buddha); (2) his joyful body (showing Buddha rewarded for his virtues); (3) his fleshly body, under which Buddha appears on earth as a man. The modern schools of Buddhism have divided their Trinity under three images which are placed side by side, thus completely missing the true signification (which is Trinity in unity) and the adherents of Taoism, wishing to imitate the Buddhists in this particular, worship Lao Tzu under (another version of) the three pure ones, namely (1) as the original revered god, (2) the supreme ruler Tao, and (3) the supreme ruler Lao Tzu. Almighty God (T'ien) is ranked below these three, which is nothing short of an outrageous usurpation. Moreover, the first two do not represent the spiritual and joyful bodies of Lao Tzu and the two images set up cannot form a Unity with him; while the introduction of the third is an aggravated copy of the mistake made by the Buddhists. Chuang Tzu has told us in plain language of the death of Lao Tzu, who must now be a spirit; how then can he usurp the place of Almighty God ?[17]

Under Buddhist influence, the cult of Tārā became very popular in China. She is the Śakti or female counterpart or repository of energy of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, conceived as the saviour and the Mother of Mercy. She passed out of India to Tibet and came to be known as Sgrol-ma or Ḍol-ma in the Tibetan translation of her name. Like her husband Avalokiteśvara (Spyan-ras-gzig-Chen-re-si), she was also conceived under numerous forms. The Tārā cult, with the goddess in her

various forms. also went to China as the Śakti of Avalokiteśvara. But in China, Avalokiteśvara was already on the way to transformation from a god into a goddess through the influence of the pre-Buddhistic (Taoist and Confucian) Mother Goddess Si-Wang-Mu, the representative of *Yin* or the Female Principle. This happened in the seventh and eighth centuries, when Tārā became absolutely merged into her husband, who became transformed into the goddess Kuan-yin in China. This double form of Tārā became very popular in China and brought in her connection most of the existing Chinese beliefs and rituals, especially those belonging to Taoism. The whole process has been summarized by Chatterji[18] as follows:

> Ideas of Taoistic ritual, with women for the perfection of the *Yang* in men through commerce with the *Yin* in women—of the perfection of the man or the Puruṣa by union with woman as *Prakṛti* or Śakti, to speak in the Indian way—were adopted in Indian Buddhist Tantrism in China, probably from the fourth century A.D. onwards. In the meanwhile, the Tārā cult, as a corollary of the Bodhisattva ideal, and the Sakti ideal, developed in India and spread into Tibet and into China. In China, Avalokiteśvara changed his sex, and in this way his Śakti, the white-robed Tārā whose worship was introduced in China in the eighth century A.D. and he himself became merged into a single deity, the deity of mercy, the goddess Kuan-yin, who would quite naturally be regarded by uninformed Indians as Tārā herself. The very great vogue of the Kuan-yin cult in China could pass for Tārā worship there, according to Indian ideas. Indian adepts, who were attracted by *Vāmācāra* as a new doctrine from China, may have gone from Assam to China either by passing Tibet or going through Tibet.

The Taoist rituals which thus came into the fold of the Tārā cult in China as well as Yinism or Exaltation of the Female Principle in Taoism, which developed in that system as a corollary of the aforesaid Chinese Buddhist cult of the Female Principle, were able to exert a counter-influence upon the development of the Indian *Vāmācāra* rites of both the Buddhist and non-Buddhist Tantras. In the Indian tradition, *Vāmācāra*

is also known as *Cīnācāra*. It has been proved that some Taoist ideas and practices, which were partly religious, partly magical, partly scientific and partly also in the plane of an erotic or sexual ritualism with mystic and philosophical implications, came to India from China. As early as the beginning of this century H.P. Sastri[19] pointed out from Sanskrit texts the connection of the goddess Tārā with Tibet and China and of the *Vāmācāra* practices with China. On the basis of the *Tārātantra* and other Tantric works, Sylvan Levi[20] also came to the conclusion that the worship of Tārā in a new garb and the Tantric *Vāmācāra* practices, involving the use of the "Five M's" (*madya* or wine, *matsya* or fish, *māṁsa* or meat, *mudrā* or gestures and *maithuna* or sexual intercourse) came from China. P.C. Bagchi[21] brought in fresh proofs, indicating Chinese and Tibetan influences on the evolution of some of the important characteristic ideas, cults and practices of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist Tantras. Tantric texts like the *Mahācīnācārakrama Brahmayāmala*, *Rudrayāmala*, and even later texts like the *Merutantra*, etc., make categorical statements about the cult and *Vāmācāra* practices connected with the worship of the goddess Tārā, that these came from China, being brought from there by the sage Vaśiṣṭha who was instructed by the Buddha himself, and who witnessed these practices in China itself.[22]

It is to be noted that according to the legends found in the Indian Tantric texts, Vaśiṣṭha performed the Tārā rituals at the shrine of Kāmākhyā, the celebrated seat of Tantric culture, before his visit to Mahācīna. After obtaining the necessary instructions in the Cīnācāra rituals, he came back to Kāmākhyā again which became the centre of his activities. Near the Kāmākhyā hill in Gauhati there is still a place called Vaśiṣṭhāśrama which is largely visited by pilgrims. In Assam, there was already an interest in China and in Taoist doctrines from the seventh century, at least. The message of Taoism had, however, already reached India. In A.D. 520, Song Yun, the Chinese traveller, during a short visit, lectured on the *Tao-Teh-king* of Lao Tzu before the king of Udyāna in the North-Western Frontier of India. In eastern India, Taoism was able to draw greater attention. Needham[23] writes:

> We saw that Taoist sexual theories and practices were

flourishing between the second and the sixth centuries A.D. in China, definitely before the rise of the cult in India, and its reimportation (if it was a reimportation) by the Buddhists. Bhattacharyya significantly tells us here that the principal localities associated with Buddhist Tantrism were in Assam. This reminds us that one of Pelliot's most remarkable memoirs concerned a Sanskrit translation of the *Tao-Teh-king*. It was made for Bhāskara Kumāra, king of Kāmarūpa (Assam) who had asked Wang Hsuan Tshe for it in 644. A very living account of the work being done, with all the difficulties which the translation involved, exists in the *Chi ku Chin Fo Tao Lun Heng* under date 647. Pelliot translated this. In Tantric literature, moreover, China (Mahācīna) occupies a very important place as being the seat of a cult *Cīna Caryā* which worshipped a goddess called Mahācīna-tārā. Sages such as Vaśiṣṭha were said to have travelled there to gain initiation into this cult, in which women played a very prominent part.

The aim of the individual in Taoism was the achievement of material immorality or *Hsien* which was also the one of the aims of the followers of Tantricism. This could be attained through respiratory, heliotherapeutic, gymnastic, sexual, alchemical and dietary techniques.[24] The first one has its analogue in Indian *prāṇāyama*, the second in *Sūrya-namaskara*, the third in *haṭhayoga*, the fourth in *mithuna* techniques, the fifth in *rasāyana* and so on. According to Chatterji,[25]

> "Buddhism brought to China certain new things, no doubt, and was welcomed by the deeper spirit of quest in the Chinese mind which sought to transcend life and nature. But the acceptance of Nature as such and the logical termination of the line of argument in which Nature, conceived as the result of the eternal play of *Yang* and *Yin*, which were living forces, led Taoism to the idea or *Hsien*-ship and the possibility of its attainment. This proved to be an attractive ideology and discipline for those who, in their mental composition or temperament were, to speak in the Indian way, towards the full and free play of the *Pravṛtti* or natural inclination, and did not feel happy with the spirit

of *Nivṛtti*, which led to abstinence and asceticism. It was in this way that when they came close to the atmosphere of later Taoism, from the early centuries of the Christian era, some Buddhists from India also found in it an alluring doctrine which was sublimated and philosophized in the Indian way. In place of the Chinese *Hsien* or immortal, in India we have the *Siddha* or *Avadhūta*, the adept with miraculous powers (*siddhis*) which he can attain through Tantric practices, preferably of the Vāmācāra school. This would appear to have come to India with Tantric Buddhism sometime after the middle of the first millennium A.D., and then it joined forces with Indian naturism and eroticism, mysticism and magic, and was established as *Vāmācāra* or the Leftist Way, as opposed to the *Dakṣināchāra* or the Rightist way. In Brahmanical Tantra, it associated itself with Śiva and Umā, and acquired a kind of scriptural or mythological *imprimatur* in later Hindu thought in general."

MOTHER GODDESS AND BUDDHISM

We do not know what were the original tribal religions of the dynasties that ruled over the Magadhan empire and other adjoining kingdoms. Both Buddhism and Jainism claimed Bimbisāra and Ajātasatru, the Haryaṅka kings of Magadha, as their followers. Kings and nobles in their personal life followed their own domestic or dynastic or tribal religion and, at the same time, patronized the newly-preached ideas according to their individual choice. This was the cause of the survival of the old religious beliefs and practices and also of their making room into the new religious systems. Religion in the modern sense of the term did not bother the ancients. A man's inclination to a particular religion did not mean that all the members of his family, his sons and successors, should follow the same line. The Mauryan king Chandragupta patronized Jainism; his grandson Aśoka patronized Buddhism, and his grandson Dasaratha patronised Ājīvikism. At the same time it was also the custom of the ancient kings to pay homage to the gods and rituals of the lands they conquered. This was a very effective means of earning the goodwill of the conquered

peoples. It appears that the original tribal religion of the Maurya kings was that of the Mother Goddess. This we suggest on the basis of Lāmā Tāranātha's account of Aśoka, according to which the king was not only the worshipper of Umādevī, the Mother Goddess, but also actually encouraged the sexual rites connected with her cult and thus came to be known as Kāmāśoka.[26] Tāranātha, while writing his history of Buddhism, must have depended on some authentic tradition, although, unfortunately all of his source-books have not yet been traced.

From about the beginning of the Christian era, the popular cults of the Female Principle were gradually becoming the driving force even in the case of the higher religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc. In the Gupta age, the ceremonial worship of the images of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the Buddhist and Jain deities, along with their consorts, installed in numerous temples of magnificent proportions, became a very important feature of religious life, the installation of such temples and images being evidently due to the social surplus introduced by the new economic conditions. Buddhism changed qualitatively from the pristine simplicity of an austere moral code to the most complex system of Mahāyāna. The older form of Buddhism lost its hold upon the people giving way to a new movement, the Mahāyāna. The followers of Mahāyāna regarded the Buddha as eternal, without origin and decay, and as such beyond any description whatsoever. They indulged in certain speculations regarding the Buddha's body and gave currency to the *trikāya* conception which was further elaborated with the rise of a regular Mahāyāna pantheon. The latter came into being with five Dhyānī Buddhas who were said to have issued out of Ādi Buddha (the original Buddha) through contemplation. Each of these Buddhas was associated with a Bodhisattva and a *Śakti* in the form of a goddess. Of the Bodhisattvas or potential Buddhas, the cults of Avalokiteśvara, the embodiment of compassion, and Mañjuśrī, the personification of wisdom, flourished in the Gupta age and survived for so many centuries. The former was associated with the goddess Tārā while the latter with Lakṣmī or Sarasvatī or both. Subsequent Buddhism came under the complete grip of the Tārā cult.

According to the Mahāyāna conception, Tārā is the primordial female energy, the consort of Avalokiteśvara, who enables her devotees to surmount all sorts of dangers and calamities. A mere prayer to this goddess is sure to remove the eight *mahābhayas* (great dangers). She is also known as the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, as it is by the fulfilment of this Pāramitā that a Bodhisattva reaches the goal. Sometimes she is conceived as the supreme being, 'the mother of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas'. She became a very popular deity in India, during the early centuries after Christ when the Mahāyāna pantheon was developing rapidly, and passed out of India to Tibet and China, as we have seen. The conception of this goddess is, however, primitive and it is quite possible that in course of her conceptual developments she had absorbed within herself a number of divinities representing different aspects of the female principle. The epithets Tāra Tāriṇī, attributed to the Devī in the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas, may be traced to the *Yajurveda* in which the term Tārā, meaning 'saviour' is an appellation of the god Śivā. Then there is the Sanskrit word *Tārā* or *Tarakā* meaning a star (cf. Persian *Sitara*, Greek *Aster*, Latin *Stella* and English 'star' and also the names of such foreign goddesses as *Ishtar*, *Astarte*, *Atargatis*, *Astaroth*, etc.) and the word might easily represent the name of a goddess dwelling among the stars. Many such streams later culminated in the conception of Tārā whose cult was established in different parts of India by the sixth century A.D. From the seventh century onwards, the influence of the Buddhist Tārā began to be felt upon the religious systems of India and abroad. The significant changes which the Tārā cult brought in the Chinese way of religious life has been dealt with in the preceding section. In India, the development of the Śākta religion received a great momentum from the Tārā cult of the Buddhists. The Śākta Tārā, also called Ugratārā, Ekajaṭā and Nīla-sarasvatī is undoubtedly an adaptation of the Mahāyāna Buddhist goddess of the same name.

As a popular religion, Mahāyānism, in the course of its development, had to make compromises with peoples of widely different tastes and intellectual calibre. Heterogeneous elements of faith and customs thus began to crop up in the province of Buddhism. In course of time, elements like the *mantras* and the

dhāranis were introduced in Buddhism. In the *Tattvaratnāvali*,[27] we find Mahāyānism sub-divided into two schools, viz., Pāramitā-nāya and Mantra-nāya. The Mantra-nāya or Mantra-yāna seems to be the introductory stage of Tantric Buddhism, from which other off-shoots, like Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna, Sahajayāna, etc., arose in later times. The philosophy of Tantric Buddhism, as can be reconstructed from the earlier Buddhist Tantric texts like the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* or the *Guhyasamāja*, may be summarized as follows: The gods and goddesses are the symbols of the Buddhist conceptions of four elements and five constituents of a being. Earth is represented by the goddess Locanā, water by Māmakī, fire by Pāṇḍaravāsinī, and air by Tārā while the five constituents of a being are represented by the five Dhyānī Buddhas. Creation is due to the Śakti or female energy of the Ādi Buddha, and as such the adepts should realise that the female sex is the source of all. The *Guhyasamāja*, while describing the different ceremonies in connection with initiation mentions *Prajñābhiṣeka* or the initiation of the adept with Prajñā or Śakti. The preceptor takes the hand of Śakti, a beautiful woman, and placing it on the hand of the disciple, says that, as Buddhahood is impossible of attainment by any other means, this Vidyā should be accepted and never abandoned in life. The Vidyās were women of flesh and blood, who later on were deified. The *Sammoha Tantra* gives a list of the Vidyās whose worship was current in different parts of India. Some of these Vidyās were well known names of Buddhist and Brahmanical goddesses.

The goddess Tārā occurs in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*[28] in her various forms like Bhṛkuti, Locanā, Māmakī, Śvetā, Pāṇḍaravāsiñi, Sutārā, etc. She is described as Vidyārājñī who is full of compassion. Tārā is elevated to the position of the highest deity in *Mahāpratyaṅgirādhāranī*, a fragment of which is found in Central Asia, in which she is described as a goddess of white colour, wearing a garland of *vajras* and having the figure of Vairocana on her crown. From the seventh century onwards, we find the exuberance of Tārā-stotras (Cf. the *Sarangdhārā-stotras* composed in praise of Tārā, by the eighth century Kashmiri poet Sarvajñamitra) and the goddess is raised to the mothership of all Buddhas. According to the *Sammoha Tantra*, Nīla-sarasvatī or Ugratārā was born in a lake called *Cola* on the

Western side of the Meru which was included in the Cīnadesa. P.C. Bagchi[29] suggests that *cola* is connected with *Kul*, *Kol*, the common word for 'lake' which is found in the names of so many lakes to the west of T-ien-shan. We come across five varieties of Tārā, classified according to colour—green, white, yellow, blue and red.[30] Mention has already been made of her iconological varieties. Of other celebrated Buddhist goddesses we have already had the occasion to refer to Parṇaśabarī, Vasudhārā, Māricī, Vajravārāhī, Prajñāpāramitā, etc.

We have seen that the cult of Tārā was taken up by the Śāktas and she was regarded as one of the ten Mahāvidyās. The presiding deities of the Śākta *Ṣaṭcakra* like Ḍākinī, Hākinī, Lākinī, Rākinī, Śākinī, etc., owe their origin to the Buddhist conceptions. Buddhist Tantras were translated into Chinese in the eighth and into Tibetan in the ninth century A.D. A Cambodian inscription refers to the fact that the Tantric texts were introduced there from India at the beginning of the ninth century A.D.[31] As regards the Tantric practices, the *Guhyasamāja* and a few other early texts refer to meat-eating, union with females, and finger poses. Gradually, Tantric ideas associated with the cult of Śakti changed Buddhism to such a great extent that it ceased to be Buddhism at all. Belief in the efficacy of *mantras*, *maṇḍalas* and other elements of esoteric practices was firmly established, while the conception of ultimate reality as a duality of Male and Female Principles—Upāya and Prajñā in Buddhism—became the basis of philosophical understanding.

The conceptions of Śūnyatā and Karuṇā of Mahāyāna Buddhism later developed into those of Prajñā and Upāya in Tantric Buddhism, symbolizing the Female and Male Principles respectively. Prajñā is viewed as a goddess (Bhagavatī). The term is also used to denote *mudrā*, technically a woman to be adopted for the purpose of ritual. In some Buddhist Tantras, a beautiful girl of sixteen, who is to be adopted for the *sādhanā*, is styled Prajñā. Again, in some places Prajñā is the word for the female organ, which is the seat of all pleasure (*mahāsukha*). Upāya and Prajñā are also called thunder (*vajra*) and the lotus (*padma*) respectively, the former symbolizing the male organ (*maṇi*, *liṅga*) and the latter, the female (*yoni*).

According to the original Mahāyāna conception, Śūnyatā or perfect wisdom, and Karuṇā, or universal compassion, generate

in one's mind the *Bodhi-citta*, a state in which one is free from all worldliness. The *Bodhi-citta* next proceeds on an upward march through ten different stages (*bhūmis*), and when the last stage is reached, one becomes a perfect Bodhisattva. Tantric Buddhism interprets the whole thing in a different way. Here Śūnyatā is identified with Prajñā, the Female Principle, and Karuṇā with Upāya, the Male, and it is held that the inner union of the two produces supreme bliss. Since the human body is the abode of Buddha, and also the epitome of the universe, liberation must come through the actions of the body alone (*Kāya-sādhanā*).

In the first stage of its transformation, as we have already pointed out, Mahāyāna Buddhism was subdivided into two distinct schools, the Mantra-yāna (nāya) and Pāramitā-yāna. The former seems to be the introductory stage from which other off-shoots like Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna, Sahajayāna, etc. arose in later times. The justification of the name Vajrayāna, is probably due to the term *Vajra* in place *Śūnyatā*, i.e., the void nature of the self and all entities. According to this school, the ultimate reality is Vajrasattva who, as the Primal Enlightened one, is Ādi Buddha, possessed of five kinds of knowledge as attributes that give rise to five Dhyānī Buddhas, each associated with a female principle of its own. About the tenth century A.D. the Kālacakrayāna school developed within the fold of Vajrayāna, the supreme deity of which is Śrī Kālacakra. Kāla represents Prajñā and Cakra Upāya, and thus Kālacakra implies the absolute union of the male and female principles. Essentially, there is little difference between Vajrayāna and Kālacakrayāna. Sahajayāna, on the other hand, was a revolutionary form which denied all conventionalism, ceremonialism, muttering of *mantras*, etc., of Vajrayāna. The Sahajiyā Buddhists adopted human nature itself as the best appliance for realizing the truth, and hence they called their path the easiest and the most natural (*sahaja*).

The Sahajiyās never prescribe any unnatural strain on human nature. Great importance is laid in their literature on the human body, which is believed to be the abode of truth and also the medium for realizing the truth. The bliss produced through the union of the male and female, symbolizing Prajñā and Upāya, i.e., *Bodhi-citta*, is conceived as *Sahaja* or the

innate nature of the self or the world around. Prajñā, or the goddess, manifests herself in every woman, and every man is the embodiment of Upāya, the Male Principle, and their union alone can produce supreme bliss. In the *Caryā* songs we find mention of this Female Principle variously called as Ḍombī, Śabarī, Yoginī, Nairāmanī, Sahaja sundarī, etc., and there is also frequent mention of the union of the aspirant with this personified female deity.

The conception of the four plexuses, or lotuses, located in different parts of the body along the spinal cord, is a prominent aspect of Buddhist *Kāya-sadhanā*. The first, situated in the region of the navel, represents the Nirmāna-kāya of the Buddha; the second, in the cardiac region, represents the Dharma-kāya; the third, near the neck, represents the Sambhoga-kāya, and the fourth, in the *uṣṇīṣakamala* or head, represents the Vajrakāya or Sahaja-kāya. The Female Principle, remaining in the Nirmāṇa-kāya, is symbolized as Caṇḍālī, and in her upward march she is often described as Ḍombī. When raised in the highest stage, she is Sahajasundarī. The aspirants, both male and female, must realize their true self as Upāya and Prajñā respectively, and with this realization, they are to perform sexual intercourse and act in such a way as the downward motion of the seed may be checked and an upward motion given to it till it reaches the *Uṣṇīṣakamala* and remains there motionless. The Buddhist conception was influenced by the Śākta Tantras, according to which six nerve-plexuses or lotuses (*Ṣaṭ-cakra*)—Mūlādhāra, Svādhisthāna, Maṇipura, Anāhata, Viśuddha and Ājñā—can be located in the human body.

Tantric Buddhism was very popular in eastern India and also in parts of Kashmir and Nepal. In eastern India, Nālandā, Odantapurī and Vikramaśilā were important monasteries. The monastery of Somapurī, the site of which is represented by Paharpur in North Bengal, was in a flourishing condition till the eleventh century. Another, at Jagaddala in North Bengal, was established by Rāmapala. In Kashmir, as in Bengal, Vajrayāna and Kālacakrayāna found fertile soil. Buddhism was undoubtedly a great force in India down to the end of the twelfth century, but since it was basically monastic, detached from the people, and dependent on economic support of its royal patrons, it

could not maintain its powerful existence for a long time after the fall of the Pāla kings.

MOTHER GODDESS AND VAISNAVISM

In western India, at a somewhat later date after the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the east, a different type of religious system was evolved—the Bhāgavata or devotional religion—in which the outstanding feature was absolute devotion to one supreme god. Monotheism was the fulfilment of a process that began as early as the days of tribal disintegration. The idea of a supreme god ruling over the universe was based upon the principle of absolute monarchy. In pre-class societies, men had control over the gods. They believed that they could bring the forces of nature under their control by collective rituals and other performances. In class society, the gods represented the ruling class, to be pleased by propitiation and devotion, and monotheism was the logical consequence of this process. The quest for the divine prototype of a human monarch was marked by the resuscitation of the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the pre-Vedic god who later came to be known as Śiva. But it was not until the third century B.C. that Vaiṣṇavism as a distinguished religious system could become popular. Śaivism became prominent at a somewhat later date.

The cult of Śrī-Lakṣmī of which we have sufficient numismatic evidence, besides that of the Gajalakṣmī type, was very popular before the beginning of the Christian era. It appears that Śrī-Lakṣmī was not originally connected with Viṣṇu and that her cult was linked with that of the latter at a subsequent period of its historical growth. In both the epics, we notice Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism becoming more prominent and widespread than other cults and dividing between them the allegiance of great masses of men. But the association of the Female Principle with Viṣṇu is less prominent in the *Mahābhārata* than that with Śiva. The only goddess who is brought in connection with Viṣṇu is Pṛthivī or Mother Earth. In the *Durgāstotras* (hymns addressed to the goddess), although the goddess is described as the 'younger sister of Kṛṣṇa', 'eldest-born in the

family of the cowherd Nanda', 'born in the womb of Yaśodā', 'the favourite of Nārāyaṇa', 'the consort of Nārāyaṇa', etc., her Vaiṣṇavite association does not prove strong.

One of the most important features of Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta period was the conception of Lakṣmī or Śrī as Viṣṇu's wife. This is confirmed, as we have seen, by literary, numismatic, epigraphic and sculptural evidences. Besides the Sanskrit poetical works, Lakṣmī as the divine consort of Viṣṇu, and also as the eternal Female Principle, is mentioned in the writings of the Tamil Āḷvars. It is interesting to note that the Gopī element in Vaiṣṇavism, which is the forerunner of the later conception of Rādhā as the eternal Female Principle associated with the supreme being Kṛṣṇa, is met with in the devotional songs of the Āḷvars. Āṇḍāl or Koḍāi, daughter of Periyāḷvār, saw herself as one of Kṛṣṇa's *gopīs*, and approached the god, her beloved, in that spirit. Tantric influence on Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta age is proved by the evidence furnished by the Gangdhar inscription of which we have already had the occasion to refer.

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (fourth century A.D.) the female principle is regarded as Mahālakṣmī who is the consort of Viṣṇu. There are even passages in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* which describe the goddess as Viṣṇumāyā, the *śakti* or energy of Viṣṇu, and Nārāyaṇī, the wife of Nārāyaṇa. In spite of all this, Vaiṣṇavism was not very successful in bringing Śāktism in close alliance with it. This was due to the fact that Vaiṣṇavism failed to embrace within itself all the tribal elements associated with the Mother Goddess, which Śaivism could do on account of its popular character. The fearful forms of the goddess, the cults of blood and wine, the rituals of sex, and many other allied practices did not suit the Vaiṣṇavite religious approach, and hence they were satiated with only the primary material of her composition, her feminine nature, and the patient provision of maintenance proceeding from her.

From the eighth century onwards, the conception of Śakti came into more prominence in Vaiṣṇavism. Although in the Vaiṣṇava art and sculpture of this age, the earlier tradition was maintained, e.g., the association of Viṣṇu with the Lakṣmī-Sarasvatī, and Bhūdevī or Gajalakṣmī motif, the Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitās of the age introduced a new concept of the Female Principle. The Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitās and Saiva Āgamas agree on one point,

namely, that a Female Principle representing *Śakti* or energy must be associated with the ultimate reality, Viṣṇu or Śiva, and this *śakti* is not only the cause of manifestation but is also responsible for differentiation of worldly objects, including finite individuals. The universe comes into being because of the association of the male and the female, Viṣṇu and his Śakti, or Śiva and his Śakti, and at the end of a cosmic cycle the created universe returns to its source when Śakti comes to repose in the Lord. Vaiṣṇava teachers of this age, like Nāthamuni of Sriran-gam, wanted to base the religion upon the doctrine of Vedānta. In the earlier stages of this process, the *māyā* element as the Female Principle and as the *śakti* of Brahman did not get much importance, but later it became a potent factor, the religious implication of which culminated in the conception of a renovated Lakṣmī and that of Rādhā.

How the Tantric elements profoundly influenced the Vaiṣṇava conceptions, can be demonstrated on the basis of the *Lakṣmītantra*, a Pāñcarātra text compiled at some time between the ninth and twelfth centuries.[32] Amongst the vast number of Pāñcarātra Āgamas[33] it stands out because of its exclusive treatment of the Śakti element in Vaiṣṇavism and its reference to the Tantric way of *sādhanā* which requires a female partner. That is why this Pāñcarātra text was able to draw the attention of such later exponents of Śāktism as Bhāskararāya, Nāgesa Bhatta, Appaya Dikṣita and others.

> It has two objectives in view: Firstly, to establish the supremacy of Lakṣmī as a philosophical principle ranking, if not higher than Viṣṇu, then at least as equal to him. This is achieved by emphasising the mystic tenet of unity in duality, the two-in-one accepted by the Śākta sects. Lakṣmī as an integral part of Nārāyaṇa, the supreme being, is the embodiment of his sovereign will, and the instrumental cause of all creation....The second objective is to set down a full record of exclusive Śakti-Upāsanā within the framework of Pāñcarātra religion.[31]

Here Lakṣmī or Śakti is conceived as inherent in the supreme being, just as light is inherent in the moon. Every manifestation fo God is Śakti's manifestation, be it transcendental as in the

case of the Vyūhas, Vibhavas, incarnations, etc., or be it the material creation. She possesses five functions: *tirodhāna* or delusion; *srṣṭi* or creation; *sthiti* or sustenance; *laya* or dissolution; and *anugraha* or grace. These are also called her five *sāktis* as they sum up the different way in which she exercises her power of action (*kriyāśakti*).

The main contribution of *Lakṣmītantra* to the Pāñcarātra theology, as has been very categorically pointed out by Dr. Sanjuka Gupta, lies in co-ordinating various streams of ideas prevalent in diverse religious and philosophical traditions, but the driving force is the Śākta-Tantric tradition. This accounts for the renovated conception of Lakṣmī. The gradual increase of her influence was probably due to the religious consequence of the dualistic interpretation of the Vedānta by the Vaiṣṇava philosophers. According to Rāmānuja (A.D. 1016-1137), Māyā or Prakṛti, the Śakti or Brahman, is subject to transformation or *Pariṇāma* and hence is the instrumental cause of creation. This energy of Brahman is deified in the form of Śrī or Lakṣmī, the consort of Nārāyaṇa. This idea was advanced by Nimbārka (twelfth century A.D.) who gave exclusive prominence to the conception of Kṛṣṇa attended by the *gopis* headed by Rādhā. The conception of Rādhā was not developed even in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which was composed about the tenth century A.D.[35] But in the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva, composed about the twelfth century, and in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (thirteenth century), we find a steady advance in her conception. Madhva (thirteenth century), founder of the Dvaita school, however, did not favour the conception of Kṛṣṇa attended by Rādhā. Following Rāmānuja, he conceived of Brahman and his Śakti in the forms of Viṣṇu (Nārāyaṇa) and Lakṣmī (Śrī) residing in heaven, and this conception emphasizes their greatness and majesty (*aiśvarya*). But the conception of Rādhā, which distinguishes the followers of Nimbārka, and later of Vallabha and Caitanya, reveals a taste af God's companionship in the *Vṛndāvanalīlā*, the most intimate human social relationship in which he appears along with his consort as a human being among other humans without transcending the limitations of manhood. The followers of Vallabha sometimes dress and act like women, a parallel of which is found in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism also.

A section of the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal developed a typical Sahajiyā cult of its own. As Dasgupta notes:

> A close study of the literature of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās will leave no room for doubting the clear fact that it records nothing but the spirit and practices of the earlier Buddhist and Hindu Tantric cults, of course in a distinctly transformed form wrought through the evolution of centuries in different religious and cultural environments.[36]

The Mainamati plate (13th century) speaks of the existence of the Sahajiyā cult in Tripura. Caṇḍīdāsa (14th century) was probably a Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā and in his *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana* we can trace some of the fundamental doctrines of this sect. In Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, like Śiva and Śakti, or Upāya and Prajñā, symbolise the Male and Female Principles. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā ideal holding men and women to be nothing but physical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā should therefore be taken into account in its proper historical perspective.

MOTHER GODDESS AND SAIVISM

The pre-Vedic god who later came to be regarded as Śiva under diverse historical conditions, was deeply associated with the Mother Goddess cult of the Harappan religion. From about the third century B.C., Śaivism appeared in India as a distinct sectarian religion. By nature, Śaivism was the religion of the masses, especially of the lower strata of society, and hence it had the greatest potentiality of absorbing the Mother Goddess elements. It was in Śaivism that the ideas centering round Śakti, or the Female Principle, had found a ground most favourable for their expansion. The history of Śaivism in many of its stages is not different from that of Śāktism.

The Dakṣa-Yajña story as recounted in the *Mahābhārata*[37] indicates that the orthodox followers of the Vedic religion did not count Śiva and Devī in their pantheon. According to the *Mahābhārata*, Dakṣa arranged for a horse sacrifice, at Hardwar, which was attended by all the gods. The sage Dadhīci happened to notice that Maheśvara (Rudra-Śiva), the consort of Pārvatī,

was not present in the assembly, and when he asked Dakṣa the reason for Śiva's absence, the latter replied that there were eleven Rudras with matted hair and holding spear, but he did not know who was Maheśvara among them. The insult made Pārvatī angry, and in order to please her, Śiva created Vīrabhadra. Mahākālī, also called Bhadrakālī, born of Devī's wrath, followed Vīrabhadra to the place of Dakṣa's sacrifice, and they destroyed the sacrificial materials. The destruction of his sacrifice brought Dakṣa to his senses, and he was advised by Vīrabhadra to propitiate Śiva. Dakṣa prayed to Śiva, and having been moved by his fervent appeal, Śiva appeared on the spot and consoled Dakṣa delivering a brief lecture on his own religious views. 'It should be noticed', remarks R.P. Chanda, 'that the Śiva whom Dakṣa ignored in his sacrifice was not the Vedic Rudra but the Śiva worshipped by the Pāsupatas. The legend of Dakṣa's sacrifice indicates that the Pāsupata conception of Rudra or Śiva arose outside the pale or Vedism and the orthodox followers of the Veda could not persuade themselves to acknowledge them readily. No share of sacrificial food is claimed on behalf of Śiva's consort, Durgā.'[38]

In the Gupta age, there was a greater influence of Śāktism on the Śaiva religion. This is proved not only by the literary evidence but also by the plentiful discoveries of Hara-Pārvatī and Ardhanārīśvara images, of which some illustrations have been given in the fourth chapter. Śiva and Umā occur as Male and Female Principles, identified with the Sāṅkhya and Tāntric concepts of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. This identification is found also in the devotional hymns of the Śaiva Nāyanars of South India. The Dakṣayajña story, as enumerated in the earlier Purāṇas, points to the alliance of the Female Principle with Śiva and it is not difficult to determine the process of such an alliance. While in the *Mahābhārata* the goddess appears indifferently as the wife of Nārāyaṇa and of Śiva, her later associations became increasingly Śaivite. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, the peaceful householder's life of Śiva with Pārvatī and her children, Puranic episodes related to Śiva and his consort, etc., became the popular theme of sculpture in the Gupta and post-Gupta period. Sculptures representing the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, usually described as *Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti*, are common in many parts of India, one of the

most outstanding examples of which is the Elephanta relief. The numerous Śiva figures hailing from different parts of India, illustrative of different Śiva mythologies are divided into two groups—gracious (*saumya*), and destructive (*ugra*). Among the different types of the terrific or *ugra* forms of Śiva, mention may be made of his Bhairava, Aghora, Vīrabhadra and Virupākṣa forms. The Āgamic texts describe as many as sixty-four Bhairavas, divided into groups of eight, and they are consorts of sixty-four Yoginīs referred to in the Tantric form of Śakti worship.

In Kashmir, we get two schools of Śaivism, the Spanda and the Pratyabhijñā. The former was founded about the ninth century by Vasugupta, to whom Śiva is said to have revealed the *sūtras*. His disciple Kallaṭa wrote *Spandasarvasva*, in which he explained the meaning of the *Śiva-sūtras* as taught by his master. The important works of the Pratyabhijñā school are the *Śivadṛṣṭi* and the *Pratyabhijñā-sūtra*, composed by Somānanda and his pupil Utpala respectively in the beginning of the tenth century A.D. The *Pratyabhijñāvimarśinī* of Abhinavagupta is a commentary upon the *Pratyabhijñā-sūtra*. Abhinavagupta has also given us two more works of this school, the *Tantrāloka* and the *Paramārthasāra*. Kashmir Śaivism had based its doctrines on the Vedānta system which emphasizes the *māya* element, regarded as the *Śakti* of Brahman (Śiva). This *Śakti*, mainly divided into five categories—*cit* (the power of intelligence), *ānanda* (the power of bliss), *iccha* (the power of will), *jñāna* (the power of knowledge) and *Kriyā* (the power of action)—is not different from Śiva and is spoken of as his feminine aspect. With the opening out of Śakti, the universe appears, and with her closing it disappears.

From the tenth century onwards, Śaivism had theoretically merged with Śāktism. A section of Kāśmīra Śaivas developed a peculiar monistic form of Śāktism known as *Śāktyadvayavāda*, according to which Śakti is not different from Śiva and as such the material world is the *Pariṇāma* or consequence of Śakti. Somānanda criticized the *Śāktyadvayavāda* for its emphasis on Śakti as the only substance. Although he was a Śaiva in conviction, his interpretation of Vāk is a valuable contribution to Śākta thought. Śākta principles have also been thoroughly dealt with in Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*, *Mālinīvijayavārttika*,

Parātrimśikavivaraṇa, etc. In Kṣemarāja's *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, Gorakṣa's *Mahārthamañjarī* and others, the mystic, theological, epistemic, psychological and metaphysical aspects of the Śaiva-Śākta Āgamas have been discussed.

Vīraśaivism or Liṅgāyatism, which resorts to the primitive aspects of the Śiva-Śakti cult, envisages an integral association between Śiva and Śakti, known as *Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitavāda.* Here the potential and material moment of the Absolute is called Śiva while the actual and formal moment is called Śakti. It holds that creation is the result of the *Vimarśa Śakti* of Śiva. Śakti is the power which resides in Śiva as his inseparable attribute. She is *mūla prakṛti* or *māyā* which evolves herself into the universe. As heat is to fire and light to sun, Śakti is to Śiva, inseparably united with him as his attribute.

Another school of Śaivism which flourished in South India was Śaiva-Siddhānta. This school conceives of Śiva as the operative cause of the world and not as the material cause. Śakti (*māyā*) is the existent and material cause of the world. The followers of this school think, on the basis of the *satkāryavāda* of the Sāṅkhya, that the material world, which is in effect, must have a material cause, and the constituents of this cause cannot be qualitatively different from those of the effect. The world is material, devoid of consciousness, and therefore the immaterial *brahman* cannot be regarded as its cause. Māyā is the primordial stuff of which the world is made. Being non-intelligent, Māyā cannot evolve of itself. It requires the guidance of Śiva who acts on it through his *cit-śakti*. Thus guided, Māyā projects from itself the *tattvas* which constitute the universe.

Śrīkaṇṭha, a contemporary of Rāmānuja, expounded a system of Śaivism which is called Śivādvaita. According to this school, Śiva or Brahman is the material as well as the operative cause of the world. He is both immanent and transcendent, but effects the manifestation of the world through his Śakti or power which is divided into three aspects—*iccha* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *kriyā* (action).

While the different schools of Śaivism were thus setting up their cosmological ideas in terms of the relation between Śiva and Śakti, there were others who were still following the older tribal rituals. Mention should be made in this connection

to the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas who were mentioned by their opponents as representing the horrid and repulsive forms of Śaivism. In the absence of any literature of their own, any conclusion drawn from the writings of their opponents must be one-sided and unhistorical. According to tradition, Śaṅkara had a philosophical contest with them. Their beliefs and practices are mentioned, evidently in a distorted way, in the Purāṇas and other religious texts. According to Rāmānuja, the Kāpālikas maintained that an individual could attain the highest bliss by concentrating his mind on the soul seated on the female organ. They worshipped Śiva as Bhairava with his wife Caṇḍikā.

The history of Śaivism of the late-medieval period is not very different from that of Śāktism, as we shall see in the next section.

MOTHER GODDESS AND TANTRIC SAKTISM

Nowhere in the religious history of the world do we come across such a completely female-oriented system as Śāktism. In its present form, Śāktism is essentially a medieval religion, but it is a direct off-shoot of the primitive Mother Goddess cult which was so prominent a feature of the religion of the agricultural peoples who based their social system on the principle of mother-right. The origin of the anomalous position of the Male Principle in the Śākta religion can presumably be traced to the anomalous position of the males in a matriarchal society. We have seen that a rudimentary form of Śākta beliefs and practices may be traced to the ruins of the pre-Vedic Harappa civilization. The earlier Vedic tribes whose material cultures and social institutions have been revealed in the *Ṛgveda* appear to have disliked the conception of the Female Principle owing to their patriarchal bias, but they had also to incorporate some female deities into their pantheon. There was a revival of the pre-Vedic Mother Goddess cult in the post-Ṛgvedic age, probably due to the initiation of the Vedic tribes into the agricultural way of life and agricultural rituals, and since then, the Female Principle never ceased to be an important cult of the people. It was so deep-rooted in the Indian mind that even in

sectarian religions like Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, etc., the Female Principle had to be given a prominent position. Even the basically atheistic systems like Buddhism and Jainism could not avoid this popular influence. Later Buddhism is, in fact, nothing but a disguised Tantric cult of the Female Principle.

The cause of the increasing popularity of the Female Principle from the beginning of the Christian era was evidently connected with the changing social pattern arising out of the new economic conditions resulting from changes in the mode of production, expansion of internal and external trade, centralized state authorities, and the growth of urbanism. The caste system had by this time become a regular social institution. The agriculturists and other professionals, apart from the priestly, warrior and trading classes, did form the majority of the population, and it was the religion of this majority, the Mother Goddess of the agriculturists, that found its way into the higher levels of society under diverse historical conditions. The higher religions, in order to make themselves popular among the masses, had to make compromises with the existing cults and beliefs, and this was one of the processes through which the female divinities of the lower strata of society could have easy access therein.

Goddesses in considerable number came from the tribal peoples who, unable to maintain themselves by their traditional mode of production, had to come in contact with the advanced peoples and were put in different social grades on the basis of the quality of services they offered to the existing class society. The mass strength behind the Female Principle placed goddesses by the side of the gods of all religions, but by doing so, the entire emotion centering round the Female Principle could not be channelized. So a need was felt for a new religion, entirely female-dominated, a religion in which even the great gods like Viṣṇu or Śiva would remain subordinate to the Goddess. This new religion came to be known as Śāktism.

In its developed form, the Śākta religion became almost identical with Tantricism. It should be pointed out in this connection that Tantric ideas, generally regarded as the basis of the Śākta religion, profoundly influenced different religious sects and radically changed their views and practices. 'Tantricism', as S.B. Dasgupta[39] rightly observes, 'is neither Buddhist

nor Hindu in origin. It seems to be a religious undercurrent, originally independent of any abstruse metaphysical speculation, flowing from an obscure point of time in the religious history of India.' There is reason to believe that primitive Tantricism was a practical means to stimulate the generative powers in nature, and as such it was closely related to the Mother Goddess, the puissant and eternally active *Śakti*, representing the force of life in nature. We find a considerable degree of unity among men in different parts of the world in respect of such primitive beliefs. There are traces of Tantric rituals in the material remains of Harappa and Mohenjodaro.[40] In later Vedic literature also we come across sex rites associated with agriculture and this stream of thought and action did not cease to exist in subsequent ages.

The primitive basis of the Tantric *Pañca-mākara* or *Pañca-tattva*—the use of *madya* (wine), *māmsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudra* (cereals) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse)—can be established on investigation. Sexual rites related to fertility magic are common to all forms of primitive religion, as Frazer and Briffault have wonderfully demonstrated. Erotic practices associated with the goddess cult are older than the Tantric and Taoist texts themselves. This also holds good in the case of the rites of wine and fish. Thanks to the researches of Briffault, we can now easily connect the use of wine, as a pre-condition of sexual intercourse, with fertility magic. Fish is also closely associated with matriarchal beliefs as a fertility symbol.[41] Aphrodite, the fish-goddess, 'was worshipped as the bestower of all animals and vegetative fruitfulness, and under this aspect especially as a goddess of women'.[42] The relation between fish and the Mother Goddess is a very common feature of primitive religion.[43] Geometrical patterns, like the Tantric diagrams representing the female genitalia, were well-known in the Mesopotamian and Aegean world, and their appearances on the persons of certain goddesses like Artemis, Hera, Demeter, and the Chaldean Nana, suggest that these signs were employed as fecundity symbols.

Perhaps no religious literature has raised so much controversy in evaluation as the Tantras, and hence we should say a few words regarding the practical side of the Tantric cult of

the goddess which lays special emphasis upon the *mantras* (prayers and formulae), *bījas* (syllables of esoteric significance), *nantras* (diagrams), *mudrās* (special position of the fingers) and *nyāsas* (feeling the deities in different parts of the body). The Buddhist *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, composed about the fifth or sixth century A.D., also deals with *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* (diagrams), *mantras*, *Kriyās* (rites) and *caryās*. The *Guhyasamāja*, as we have seen, emphasizes on *Prajñābhiṣeka* or the initiation of the adept with *Prajñā* or *Śakti*, which came to denote male-female union in Vajrayāna and other forms of Tantric Buddhism. Reinforcement to the Śakti cult, as we have seen, also came from the contemporaneous Buddhist revival in which Tārā played a very prominent part. In the Śākta Tantras, many of the Buddhist female deities were identified with Śākta goddesses. The most outstanding Śākta upheaval was furnished by the Tantras which necessitated an understanding and an acceptance of the Female Principle in religious worship.

The aim of the Śākta worshipper is to realize the universe within himself and to become one with the goddess. The successive steps of the spiritual ladder are constituted by three stages—*paśu* (animal), *vīra* (heroic) and *divya* (divine). In the first stage, the aspirant can worship any sectarian god, but he must follow all the rules of social morality, and by doing so he will be raised to the second or the heroic level. In this stage, the aspirant is able to get himself initiated in *vāmācara* and *siddhāntācāra*. For the correct understanding of the mystic rites, he requires proper training from a *guru* (preceptor). Now he has the right to disregard the social conventions about sexual purity and defy taboos about food and drink, since he has to look upon all women as manifestations of Śakti and to be free from all sorts of social prejudices. The ritual of *pañcamakāra*—wine, fish, meat, diagram, and coitus—performed in the proper ways under the spiritual guidance of the *guru* elevates the aspirant to the *divya* or divine standard, and in this stage he is free to get himself initiated in the *kaulacāra*. The Kaula worshipper of Śakti is above all moral judgements, free from all worldly attachments.

The logic of Tantra is in itself very simple. What appears to be complicated is the technical and esoteric aspects of the rituals. In its social sphere, the Tantra is free from all sorts

of caste and patriarchal prejudices. All women are regarded as manifestations of Prakṛti or Śakti, and hence they are objects of respect and devotion. Whoever offends them incurs the wrath of the great goddess. Every aspirant has to realize the latent Female Principle within himself, and only by becoming female is he entitled to worship the supreme being (*vāmā bhūtvā yajet parām*). A woman and even a Śūdra is entitled to function in the role of the preceptor. Besides, the Tantra has made positive contributions to the field of material sciences, and its emphasis to this branch of learning is obviously linked with its original doctrines. This aspect of Tantra should, however, be treated in a separate work, and here our scope is limited. It is therefore obvious that such a revolutionary system is bound to be discouraged by the orthodox upholders of Brahmanical traditions.

With the identification of Prajñā and Upāya with the female and male principles respectively, the idea of Śakti and Śiva was established in the Buddhist Tantras. From a metaphysical point of view, Prajñā is the passive spectator, while Upāya or Karuṇā is the active agent that stirs up waves of mentation in Prajñā. This idea seems to be closely akin to the popular Sāṅkhya view, and thus the metaphysical significance of Prajñā and Upāya has a close bearing on the conceptions of Śakti ąnd Śiva. The only difference is that in Śāktism, the male spirit (Śiva or Puruṣa) is the passive spectator whose existence is necessary to stir up energy in Prakṛti (Śakti or the Female Principle) and it is Prakṛti or Śakti that is the only active world force. But notwithstanding this difference in notion, Prajñā and Upāya have throughout been drawn in the image of Śiva and Śakti. S.B. Dasgupta observes:[44]

The real origin of the Buddhist Sahajiyā cult is not to be sought exclusively or even mainly in any of the theories and practices of Buddhism proper either in its Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna aspect. The real origin of the cult lies more outside Buddhism than inside it. The Buddhist Sahajiyā cult, notwithstanding the Buddhist tone and colour which it assumes, is essentially an esoteric Yogic cult. Side by side with the commonly known theological speculations and religious practices, there has been flowing in India an

important religious undercurrent of esoteric Yogic practices from a pretty old time; these esoteric practices, when associated with the theological speculations of the Śaivas and the Śāktas, have given rise to the Śaiva and Śakta Tāntricism; when associated with Buddhism speculations, these esoteric practices have given rise to the composite religious system of Buddhist Tāntricism; and, again, when associated with the speculations of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism the same esoteric practices have been responsible for the growth of the esoteric Vaiṣṇavite cult known as Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā movement.

The Yāmalas give us for the first time a well-developed Tantric pantheon. The existence of the principal *Yāmalas*, excepting the *Brahma Yāmala* and fragments of the *Rudra Yāmala*, is not known to us. The former has two supplements known as the *Jayadratha Yāmala* and the *Piṅgalāmata*. The *Jayadratha Yāmala* gives detailed information on the various modes of Tantric *sādhanā*, together with a description of the various branches of the Tantric literature and also of divinities, mostly Śaktis, such as Kālikā, Saṅkarṣanī, Kālasaṅkarṣanī, Carcikā, Ḍāmbarakālī, Grahaṇeśvarī, Ekatārā, Śavaśabarī, Indīvarakālikā, Dhanadakālikā, Ramaṇikālikā, Īśānakālikā, Vajravatī, Rakṣākālī, Mantramātā, Jīvakālī, Saptākṣarā, Ṛkṣakarṇī, Bhairavaḍākinī, Kālāntakī, Vīryākālī, Prajñākālī, Saptārṇakālī, and Siddhilakṣmī. The supplementary literature of the Yāmala group thus indicates a Śākta orientation of the Tantric culture. This character of the Tantras became firmly established by the thirteenth century.[45]

The *Sammoha Tantra*, another descriptive work of this period, deals with various traditions and *mantras*, the geographical classification of the Tantras and a detailed account of the Vidyās or cults belonging to different schools. So far as the geographical classification is concerned, it distributes the Tantras into four areas—Kerala, Kāśmīra, Gauḍa and Vailāsa. Then it gives a detailed description of the Vidyās or goddesses, nearly a hundred in number, all representing various aspects of Śakti, showing that the Tantras by this time had assumed a complete Śākta character and that they had assimilated a very large number of cults of various origins—regional, tribal and

sectarian. This state of things must have been attained by the fourteenth century, when the *Sammoha Tantra* seems to have assumed its final form.[46]

According to the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, a work of the eleventh century, the Kaula class of Tantras was introduced by Matsyendra Nātha who was probably the founder of the Yoginī-Kaula of Kāmarūpa. The term *Kula* stands for Śakti. There were a good number of Kaula schools, e.g., Vṛṣanottha, Vahni, Sadbhāva, Padottiṣṭha, Mahā, Siddha, Jñānanīrṇiti, Siddhāmṛta, Ṣṛsṭi, Candra, Śaktibheda, Ūrmi, Jñāna and so on. According to Bagchi,[47] the Yoginī Kaula of Matsyendra Nātha had something in common with the Buddhist Tantras of the Sahajiyā class. This syncretism probably led to the growth of the Nātha sect and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of the succeeding centuries.

The aspirants of all these groups believed in the use of psychic energy in bringing about the union of the two principles. The body was recognized as the abode of all truth, and the best medium for realizing the truth. Reference has already been made to the Buddhist form in which we have the conception of four plexuses or lotuses within the body. Among the innumerable nerves of the body, three are most important, two by the two sides of the spinal cord and one in the middle. With these two-side nerves are identified the Buddhist principles of Prajñā and Upāya. In the Śākta Tantras, the nerve in the right, Upāya of the Buddhists, is known as *piṅgalā*, and that of the left, Prajñā of the Buddhists, as *iḍā*. These two represent the principle of duality, and the middle one, variously known as *susummā*, *avadhutika* or *sahaja* represents absolute unity. The Śakti which resides in man, and the development of which is one of the aims of Tantricism, is called *kuṇḍalinī*. It resides in the *mūlādhārā*, the lower extremity of the spinal cord, where it remains latent and sleeps quietly. When roused by successful manipulation, this *kuṇḍalinī* ascends to the next higher stage viz. *svādhiṣṭhāṇa* which is situated near the root of the generative organ. Then it moves on to the centres, *maṇipura* (the navel region), *anāhata* (heart region) and *viśuddha* (junction of the spinal cord and the medulla oblongata) and finally to the *ājñā* (between the eyebrows) where the Śakti becomes manifest in the form of a flash of light. At *sahasrāra*, or the highest cerebral region, the Sakti meets its source.

The goddess Śākinī resides in the *mūlādhāra*, Lākinī in *manipura*, Rākinī in *anāhata*, Ḍākini in *Viśuddha*, Kāminī in *svādhiṣṭhāna* and Hākinī in *ājñā*, according to the later Tantric manuals. The Kuṇḍalinī Śakti is the original Female Principle, the Devī, whom the aspirant has to send from the lower extremity of the spinal cord to the highest cerebral point where she meets Śiva, and their union produces the liquor of immortality. Wine is the nectar which flows from the union of the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti with Śiva at the Sahasrāra in the head. *Maithuna*, one of the five *tattvas*, symbolized by the concept of unity behind all duality, is brought in harmony with the concept of the union of Śiva and Śakti which takes place in the *sahasrāra*.

Many of the Tantric texts known to us are quoted in the digests which occupy a very important place in the literature of the Tantras. Of the earlier digests may be mentioned the *Prapañcasāra* attributed to the great Śaṅkara and the *Śaradātilaka* of Lakṣmaṇa Deśika. There are about half a dozen commentaries on the former, while the latter has been commented upon by Mādhavabhaṭṭa, Rāghavabhaṭṭa and others. Of the later digests, Kṛṣṇānanda's *Tantrasāra* stands unique, and it has a nice agreement with the *Śāradātilaka* regarding the description of the deities. These works describe numerous forms of Śaktis, a number of them being classed as the Mahāvidyās or Vidyās and the Nityās. The *Tantrasāra* quotes two lists of Mahāvidyās from the *Mālinīvijaya* and *Muṇḍamālā*. Some later Tantras correlate the ten Mahāvidyās with ten Avatāras of Viṣṇu. Besides the digests, the Śākta-Tāntric ideas were enriched by the contributions of the outstanding Śākta philosophers and commentators like Bhāskararāya of South India, Nīlakaṇṭha of Mahārāṣṭra and others. The traditional seventy-seven Āgamas belonging to the Śakti cult are divided into five *śubhāgamas* which teach practices leading to the knowledge of liberation, sixty-four *Kualāgamas* which teach practices intended to develop magical powers, and eight *miśrāgamas* which aim at both. Śiva and Śakti stand in the Tantras in relation of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* respectively, the former quality being of the nature of pure consciousness, impersonality and inactivity. Bhāskararāya defines *Vimarśa* as the spontaneous vibration of the *prakāśa*, the power which gives rise to the world of distinctions

but which remains latent in the absolute. The potentiality of the whole object-world exists as the Vimarśa or Śakti. Prakṛti or Māyā is looked upon as the substance of Śakti under whose direction it evolves into the several material elements and physical portions of all sentient beings. Instead of the twenty-five *tattvas* of the Sāṅkhya, here we have thirty-six, classed into Śivatattva or the absolute, Vidyātattva or the subtle manifestations of Śakti and Ātmatattva, or the material universe from Māyā down to the earth. The individual, under the influence or Māyā, looks upon himself as a free agent and enjoyer, and it is only the knowledge of Śakti that leads him to the way of liberation. Jīvanmukti or liberation in this life is admitted which depends on self-culture, and on the awakening of forces within the organism.

The origin of Śāktism was spontaneous evolving out of the prehistoric Mother Goddess cult, and symbolizing the facts of primitive life. But its development was manifold—not through any particular channel—like a lot of streams, some big some small, issuing from a single source. Each of these streams and also their combined courses have to be understood on the basis of the material mode of life providing the rationale for the types of religious beliefs and practices developing among peoples belonging to different cultural grades and on that of the diverse historical conditions under which the Female Principle made its way into other forms of Indian religious systems. From the tenth century onwards, the Śākta-Tāntric cults gained a qualitatively changed character and became woven into the texture of all the religious practices current in India. It was due to the fact that the Śākta Tantric cults offered a sharp criticism and rejection of all external formalities in regard to religious practices and spiritual quests, revived the mystical, obscure and esoteric, but protestant and heterodox elements of the existing religious systems, and upheld a new philosophy of life which consisted of the recognition of the *guru* as essential for any spiritual exercise and quest; of the human body as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experience; and of the experience of the ultimate reality as one of the inexpressible happiness and absolute non-duality. In the field of social life, the Śākta-Tantric principles offer a set of values quite opposite in character

to the authoritarian and patriarchal structure upheld by the writers of the Smṛtis and violently enforced in practice by the ruling class. We do not know whether the Śākta-Tāntrikas were really persecuted for their radicalism, but there is evidence to show that attempts were made from different corners to blacken their ideals.[48]

Notes

1. James, *CMG*, 11-12.
2. *Ibid.*, 192-96.
3. Plumpe, *ME*, 35 ff.
4. *PS*, 120.
5. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, LXXVIII. 11, 24; LXXIX. 4, 7.
6. Conybeare in *PSHT*, 1902, 13 f.
7. *Dial. cum Trypho*, C. 3.
8. *Adversus Haereses*, III. 22.4.
9. James, *CMG*, 202-06.
10. See Carol, *M.*
11. Cecchelli, *MC*, I. 83, 88, 217, 235.
12. Luke I, 26-38.
13. *Ibid.*, II. 22 ff; XII. 2-8.
14. James, *CMG*, 222, for details 217ff.
15. Dubs in *JAOS*, LXI (1941), 215-21; Fung Yu-Lan, *HCP*, I. 170.
16. See Werner, *DCM.*
17. Bruce, *CHHM*, 239 ff.
18. *JAS*, 1959, 118.
19. *NSM*, I. Pref.
20. *N*, I. 346.
21. *IHQ*, 1931, 1-16.
22. Bhattacharyya, *BE*, 155-56.
23. *SCC*, II. 425 ff.
24. *Ibid.*, 33-164.
25. *JAS*, 1959, 113.
26. Chattopadhyaya, *HBT*, 53.
27. *GOS*, XL.
28. 508, 647-48.
29. *ST*, 43-44.
30. Getty, *GNB*, 122 ff.
31. Majumdar, *IK*, 362 ff.
32. This text has been edited and translated by my esteemed friend Dr. Sanjukta Gupta, Leiden 1972.
33. Schrader, *IP*, 6-12.
34. Gupta, *LT*, XXII.

35. For the antiquity of the Rādhā cult see *ABORI*, XXXVI, 231-57.
36. Dasgupta, *ORC*, 134-35.
37. XII. 282-83.
38. *IAR*, 129.
39. *ORC*, 27.
40. Kosambi, *ISIH*, 54; Banerjee, *DHI*, 171.
41. Dikshit, *MG*, 30-36.
42. Seffert, *DCA*, 38 f.
43. Mackenzie, *CPHE*, 237.
44. *ORC*, XXXIV.
45. Bagchi, *ST*, 109 ff.
46. *Ibid.*, 96 ff.
47. *KMT*, intro. 33.
48. For details see my *HSR*.

Appendix I: Regional Distribution of the Goddess Cult

THE EPICS AND PURANAS ON PLACES SACRED TO DEVI

A concrete idea of the popularity of the goddess cult in the first three centuries of the Christian era may be formed from the evidence furnished by the Tīrthayātrā section of the Vana-parvan of the *Mahābhārata*[1] which, as we have noted, refers at least to three holy places associated with the *yoni* (sexual organ) and *stana* (breast) of the Devī. These are the Yonikuṇḍas at the Bhīmāsthāna near the Pañcanada (Punjab) and on the hill called Udyotaparvata, and the Stanakuṇḍa on the peak known as Gaurīśikhara. Places associated with the sexual organ of the Mother Goddess are regarded sacred in Indian tradition. The shrine of Kāmākhyā, celebrated for such an idea, will be mentioned later. The Bhīmāsthāna, literally, the resort of Bhīmā, was situated on the Karamar, not far from the Shahbazgarhi in the Peshawar district. The temple of the goddess Bhīmā is mentioned by Hiuen Tsang. There is also a river called Bhīmā, same as Bhimarathī, a tributary of the Krishna, rising from the Sahyādri, the source of which is adorned by the temple of Bhīmaśaṅkara, one of the twelve Jyotirliṅgas. The goddess known as Vargabhīmā, worshipped in her shrine at Tamluk in the Midnapore district of West Bengal, may also have some affinity with the goddess whose site is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. The name of the Gaurīśikhara (literally the peak of Gaurī) connects the peak with the Himālaya. There is also a *tīrtha* called Gaurīśikhara near Kashmir where Umā is

said to have received a fair complexion out of her blue lotus colour by practising *tapas*. The Purāṇas[2] mention Gaurītīrtha, the identification of which is however uncertain. In addition to the Yonikuṇḍas, the *Mahābhārata*[3] mentions Yonidvāra which is a sacred spot on the Brahmayoni hill in Gaya.

The Tīrthayātrā section also speaks of other holy places—Mātṛtīrthas or Devītīrthas—connected with the goddess cult. Of these, Puṣkara and Kurukṣetra were associated with the goddess Sāvitrī or Gāyatrī, and Śākambharītīrtha with the great goddess Śākambharī of the Purāṇas, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* also as Suvratā Devī. The Purāṇas[4] mention other Mātṛ-tīrthas, besides Kurukṣetra, in the Narmadā and Godāvarī region. Regarding the Devītīrthas, the Purāṇas, especially the later ones, are more elaborate. The *Matsya*[5] and other Purāṇas, as we shall see later, enumerates 108 Devīsthanas. The former[6] mentions a holy place called Devīkāṭata where the goddess is called Nandinī. The *Kālikāpurāṇa*[7] mentions Devīkūṭa where the feet of Satī's corpse fell. It also enumerates eight Devīpīṭhas, sacred to the goddess.[8] The *Devībhāgarata*[9] enumerates numerous Devīsthānas, such as Kolhāpura, Tulajāpura, Saptaśṛṇga, etc., which later became very famous holy resorts of the goddess. Of other places sacred to the Devī, the *Mahābhārata* mentions Kalikāsaṅgama, which is referred to also in the *Padma*[10] and *Agni* Purāṇas,[11] Campā, Dhūmāvatī and Lalitā. It is difficult to identify these places.

A complete list of 108 names of the Mother Goddess with the specification of her association with particular holy places is found in the *Matsyapurāṇa*[12] and the same text has been quoted with slight changes in the Revākhaṇḍa sub-section[13] of the Āvantyakhaṇḍa section of the *Skandapurāṇa*, the Sṛṣṭi-khaṇḍa[14] section of the *Padmapurāṇa* and the *Devībhāgavata*.[15] Many of the place-names associated with the goddess are, however, imaginary. In a subsequent section, we shall have occasion to deal with these Puranic lists of holy places.

THE DEVI SHRINES IN EARLIER TANTRAS AND PURANAS

The *Hevajra Tantra* of the Buddhists which was composed about the middle of the eighth century A.D. enumerates the

following four holy regions as *pīṭhas* or resorts of the goddess: (i) Jālandhara, (ii) Oḍiyāna, (iii) Pūrṇagiri and (iv) Kāmarūpa.[16] Other Buddhist works, such as the *Sādhanamālā*[17] give, the four names as Oḍiyāna or Uḍḍiyāna, Pūrṇagiri, Kāmarūpa or Kāmākhyā and Śrīhaṭṭa or Sirihaṭṭa. Jāḷandhara in the Punjab region seems to have been recognized as one of the four Pīṭhas even down to the late medieval period. According to the *Matsyapurāṇa*,[18] Jālandhara is a hill sacred to the Pitṛs and the goddess on it is called Viśvamukhī. According to the *Kālikā-purāṇa*, here fell the breast of the goddess when Śiva carried her corpse and the goddess was Caṇḍī. The city of the same name on the Sutlej is mentioned in the *Vāyupurāṇa*,[19] and this place is perhaps indicated in the *Brahmāṇḍā-purāṇa*,[20] and the *Padmapurāṇa*[21] as one of the *pīṭhas* of the goddess Lalitā. Oḍiyāna or Uḍḍiyāna is located in the Swat Valley, although some scholars have wrongly identified it as Odra or Orissa in eastern India. Hiuen Tsang had not only noticed the prevalence of Śakti worship in Gandhāra, but also left an account of the Tantric practices among the peoples of Uḍḍiyāna. According to the *Kālikāpurāṇa*,[22] here the two thighs of Śatī's corpse fell. The eminence of Uḍḍiyāna in Tantric world is indicated by the recognised association of its name with the worship of the Buddhist deities, Mārīcī, Kurukullā, etc.

The identification of Purṇagiri is uncertain. Later sources locate it in Mahārāṣṭra. The name may not be unconnected with that of the Pūrṇā (modern Paira), a branch of Godāvarī which falls into the Parbhani district.[23] There is another Pūrṇā in Surat district[21] while a third Pūrṇā is in Berar which falls into the Tāpī on its left bank.[25]

Kāmarūpa or Kāmākhyā is a very important eastern Indian site of the Mother Goddess cult. Here the temple of Tripura-bhairavī stands on the beautiful Nīlācala hill overhanging the Brahmaputra river. It is about three miles from Gauhati and was famed even in ancient times. The glory of Kāmākhyā has been described in the *Devībhāgavata*,[26] but more elaborately in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*.[27] In the latter,[28] it is said that on Kāmagiri in Kāmarūpa, the private parts of Satī fell when her corpse was carried by Śiva, and the Devī is known there as Kāmākhyā. It is interesting to note that the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, who lived for some time at the court of the Kāmarūpa king

Bhāskaravarman in the seventh century was silent about the goddess Kāmākhyā. It is therefore not improbable that the presiding deity of Kāmarūpa did not quite attain her pre-eminence in the days of Hiuen Tsang. The goddess seems to be called Mahāgaurī in the records of Vanamāla (10th century) and Indrapāla (12th century)—kings of Kāmarūpa.

The goddess Kāmākhyā was originally of tribal origin, as we have remarked in a preceding chapter. According to the *Kāmākhyātantra*, the goddess is worshipped in five different forms—Kāmākhyā, Tripurā, Kāmeśvarī, Śāradā and Mahāmāyā. There is no image in her temple. Only a *yoni*-shaped stone, smeared with vermilion, is set up to represent the goddess. The worship of this goddess is said to have been introduced by the Asura Naraka, the king of Kāmarūpa. However, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, when Kāmarūpa was occupied by the Koch king Viśvasiṃha, an attempt was made to revive the ancient Kāmākhyā cult. The present temple was built in 1565 during the reign of his son Naranārayāṇa alias Malladeva. A century later, the Ahom kings who conquered the eastern zones of Kāmarūpa took the charge of her worship. According to the popular tradition, king Naranārayāṇa employed a Brāhmaṇa named Kendukalai as her priest and the goddess was so pleased with his worship that she used to dance before him assuming the form of a beautiful damsel. The king bribed Kendukalai and saw her dance. At this the goddess punished the king and cut off the head of Kendukalai. There is an Assamese proverb: *Kendukalair murchingār dare mur chiingim.* A similar legend centering round the goddess Artemis is found in Greek mythology. The blood-thirsty nature of this goddess has been referred to previously. When her new temple was opened, the occasion was celebrated by offering to her the heads of 140 persons.

The *Rudrayāmala*, which was composed about the tenth century A.D., mentions ten holy places associated with Śākta-Tāntric practices. These ten *pīṭhas*, which include the celebrated four mentioned previously, are: (v) Vārāṇasī (vi) Javalantī (Jvālāmukhī of later texts), (vii) Māyāvatī (near Hardwar), (viii) Madhupurī (Mathurā), (ix) Ayodhyā (near Fyzabad, U.P.) and (x) Kāñcī (Kanchīpuram in the Chingleput district). Of these, Jvalantī or Jvālāmukhi, which is described in the *Devī-*

bhāgavata[29] as a celebrated Devīsthāna, deserves special mention. In the third quarter of the fourteenth century, Shams-i-Shiraj 'Afif mentioned the idol of Jvālāmukhī, which was situated on the road to Nagarkot, and wrote:

> Some of the infidels have reported that Sultan Firuz went specially to see this idol and held a golden umbrella over its head. Other infidels said that Sultan Muhammad Shah bin Tughlak Shah held an umbrella over this same idol; but this is also a lie.[30]

The *Pīṭha* of Jālandhara has also been mentioned by Abul Fazl, whose account of the Śākta shrines will be reproduced later. Māyāvatī, which is same as Mayapurī of the Purāṇas, is no other than Gaṅgādvāra or Haridvāra. According to the *Matsya-purāṇa*,[31] the Devī is called here Kumārī. Madhupuri stands both for Mathurā and for Mādurā which is Mathurā of the south, with its celebrated temple of the goddess Mīnākṣī. Mādurā is only the Tamil way of pronouncing Mathurā. We have referred to the conflagration of Mādurā due to the curse of Kannaki. Kāñcī was one of the seven holy cities of India. According to the Purāṇas,[32] it was a celebrated Devīsthāna with Annapūrnā as the presiding goddess. In the *Barhāspatya-sūtra*[33] it is mentioned as a Śaktikṣetra.

The *Kubjikātantra* enumerates forty-two centres of Śakti cult: Māyāvatī, Madhupurī, Kāśī, Gorakṣakāriṇī, Hiṅgulā, Jālandhara, Jvālāmukhī, Nagarasambhava, Rāmagiri, Godāvarī, Nepāla, Karṇasutra, Mahākarṇā, Ayodhyā, Kurukṣetra, Siṃhala, Maṇipura, Hṛṣikeṣa, Prāyaga, Badari, Ambikā, Vardhamāna or Ardhanālaka, Triveṇī, Gaṅgāsāgara-saṅgama, Nārikela, Virajā, Uḍḍiyāna, Kamalā, Vimalā, Māhiṣmatī, Vārāhī, Tripurā, Vāgmatī, Nīlavāhinī, Govardhana, Vindhyagiri, Kāmarūpa, Ghaṇṭākarṇa, Hayagrīva, Mādhava, Kṣīragrāma and Vaidyanātha. A few of these sites have been identified and described previously. Some are well-known places of Hindu pilgrimage which require no special discussion. Of the remaining ones, Gorakṣakāriṇī or Gorakṣacārinī is difficult to identify. The *Varāhapurāṇa*[34] mentions a holy place called Gorakṣaka but does not mention anything about its identification. Hiṅgulā, also known as Hiṅgalāja or Hiṅgulāṭa, is modern Hinglaj in

Baluchistan which is one of the celebrated Śākta *pīṭhas* of which we shall refer to in a subsequent section. It is not possible to locate geographically the site of Nāgarasambhava or Nagara-sambhava, but it may have some bearing on Nagara-koṭa-kāṅgrā, the celebrated seat of the Mother Goddess. Rāmagiri is Ramtek, twenty-eight miles north-east of Nagpur. Nepāla, modern Nepal, is described in the Purāṇas[35] as a *mahāsthāna* (great place) of the goddess Guhyakālī. The *Brahmapurāṇa*[36] mentions it as one of the fifty-one *pīṭhas*. We do not know anything about Karṇasūtra and Mahākarṇa. The *Padmapurāṇa*,[37] however, refers to one Karṇahrada near Gaṅga-sarasvatī-saṅgama. In Garhwal, there is a place called Karṇaprayāga. Siṃhala is modern Ceylon or Śrīlaṅkā. Maṇipura is possibly a place in the Manipur state of eastern India. The *Varahāpurāṇa*[38] mentions Maṇipuragiri as a holy place. Ambikā may be Ambikā-kalnā in the Burdwan district of West Bengal renowned for the goddess Ambikā, who was previously a Jain deity. The *Liṅgapurāṇa*[39] mentions one Ambikātīrtha and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*[40] mentions one Ambikā-vana on the Sarasvatī. Virajā is a celebrated Śākta *Pīṭha*, which is modern Jajpur on the Vaitaraṇī in the Cuttack district, Orissa. Māhiṣmati is modern Maheśvara in the Indore region and less possibly Māndhāta in the Nimar district, Madhya Pradesh. Vārāhī must have something to do with such places as the Varāhakṣetra and Varāhaparvata (Baramula in Kashmir),[41] the Varāha-sthānas or places sacred to the boar-incarnation of Viṣṇu like Kokāmukha, Badari and Lohargala[42] and the Varāhatīrthas mentioned in the Purāṇas. Tripurā is a well known Śākta *Pīṭha* in the Tripura (Hill Tipperah) State. Vagmatī is a site on the river of the same name in Nepal which is especially mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa*.[43] Nīlavāhinī cannot be identified but can be connected with numerous holy places connected with the *Nīla*. Ghaṇṭākarṇa is mentioned as a sacred lake to the west of Vyāseśa in the *Nārādīya Purāṇa*[44]. Hayagrīva may be the same as the Hayatirtha mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[45] but we are not in a position to identify the place. Mādhava is Mādhavatirtha on Śrīśaila mentioned in the *Padma Purāṇa*.[46] The *Matsya Purāṇa*[47] mentions a Mādha-vavana where the Devī is called Sugandhā. Kṣīragrāma is a celebrated Śākta *Pīṭha* in the Burdwan district of West Bengal. Ayodhyā, Kurukṣetra, Hṛṣikeṣa, Prayāga, Badarī, Triveñī,

Gaṅgāsāgara-saṅgama, Vindhyagiri, Vaidyanātha, etc., are well-known to every Indian.

THE 108 PURANIC HOLY RESORTS OF THE MOTHER GODDESS

We have already referred to the fact that 108 Mother Goddesses and their holy resorts are mentioned in the Purāṇas.[48] This interesting list includes the following names : Viśālākṣī (in Vārānasī, modern Benaras in U.P.), Liṅgadariṇī (in Naimiṣa, modern Nimkhar or Nimsar and Misrikh regions in the Sitapur district, U.P.), Lalitā (in Prayāga, modern Allahabad in U.P.) Kāmākṣī, Kāmukā or Kāmukī (in Gandhamādana, a Himalayan peak at Badarī), Kumudā (in Mānasa, the source of the Sutlej in the Himalayas), Viśvakāyā or Viśvakāmā (in Ambara, modern Amber in Jaipur, Rajasthan), Gomatī (in Gomanta, i.e., Goa region), Kāmacāriṇī (in Mandara, the Mandar hill in Bhagalpur district, Bihar), Madotkaṭā (in Caitraratha, location uncertain), Jayantī (in Hastināpura, in the Meerut district, U.P.), Gaurī (in Kānyakubja, in the Farrukhabad district, U.P.), Rambhā (in Malaya mountain, the southern part of the Western Ghats to the south of the Nilgiris), Kīrtimatī (in Ekāmra, modern Bhubaneswar in Orissa), Viśvā or Vilvā (in Viśvesvara, location uncertain), Puruhūtā (in Puṣkara, near Ajmer in Rajasthan), Mārgadāyinī (in Kedāra, in the Himalayas), Nandā or Mandā (in the Himalayas), Bhadrakarṇikā or Bhadrakālikā (in Gokarṇa, modern Gendia about thirty miles from Goa), Bhavānī (in Sthāneśvara, modern Thanesar near Kurukṣetra), Vilvapatrikā (in Vilvaka, mythical), Mahādevī (in Śrīśaila in Karnool district, Andhra Pradesh), Bhadrā or Bhadreśvarī (in Bhadreśvara, in Hooghly district, West Bengal), Jayā (in Varāhaśaila, either Baramula in Kashmir or Barahchatra in Nepal), Kamalā (in Kamalālaya, mythical), Rudrāṇī or Kalyāṇī (in Rudrakoṭi, either the tīrtha of this name in Kurukṣetra, or that near the source of Narmadā), Kālī (in Kālañjara, in the Banda district, U.P.), Kapilā (in Mahaliṅga, mythical), Mukuṭeśvarī or Maṅgaleśvarī (in Koṭa, possibly Kotatīrtha at Kalanjar), Mahādevī (in Śālagrama, at the source of the river Gaṇḍakī or Gandak), Jālapriyā (in Śivaliṅga, mythical), Kumārī (in Māyāpurī in the Hardwar region), Lalitā (in Santāna, mythical), Utpalā

(in Sahasrākṣa, mythical), Mahotpalā (in Hiraṇyākṣa, mythical), Maṅgalā (in Gayā), Vimalā (in Puruṣottama, Puri in Orissa), Amoghākṣi, (in Vipāśa, modern Beas, a tributary of the Indus), Pāṭalā (in Puṇḍravardhana, modern Mahasthan in Bogra district, Bangladesh), Nārāyaṇī (in Supārśva, mythical), Bhadrasundarī or Rudrasundarī (in Trikūṭa, the mythical peak of Ceylon on which the city of Laṅkā was supposed to have been situated, or Trikūṭa in northern Konkan or a hill of the same name in Deogarh), Vipulā (in Vipulā, mythical), Kalyāṇī (in Malayācala, southern part of the Western Ghats), Koṭavī (in Koṭitīrtha, of uncertain location), Sugandhā (in Mādhavavana, probably the same as Madhuvana or Mathurā), Trisandhyā (on the Godāvarī), Ratipriyā (in Gaṅgādvāra, same as Hardwar), Śivānandā (in Śivakuṇḍa, mythical), Nandinī (on the Devikā, modern Deeg in the Punjab), Rukminī (in Dvārāvati, modern Dwarka in north-western Kathiawar), Rādhā (in Vṛndāvana), Devaki (in Mathurā), Parameśvarī (in Pātāla, mythical), Sītā (in Citrakuṭa, in Bundelkhand, or less probably Chitor), Vindhyavāsinī (in the Vindhyas), Ekavīrā (on the Sahyādri or the Western Ghats), Candrikā (in Hariścandra, mythical), Ramaṇā (in Rāmatīrtha, in Sopara in the Thana district, Maharashtra or Rāmagiri, modern Ramtek near Nagpur), Mṛgāvatī (on the Yamunā), Mahālakṣmī (in Karavīra, Kolhapur in Maharashtra), Umā (in Vināyaka, one of the eight Vināyaka tīrthas in Maharashtra, viz., Ranjangaon, Margaon, Theur, Lenadri, Ojhar, Pali, Madh and Siddhatek), Ārogā (in Vaidyanātha, Deogarh-Vaidyanathdham in the Santal Parganas district, Bihar), Māheśvarī (in Mahākāla, probably Ujjain), Abhayā (in the Uṣṇa or Puṣpatīrtha, possibly connected with Puṣpagiri in the Malaya range), Amṛtā (in the Vindhyan cave), Māṇḍavī (in Māṇḍavya, modern Mandor in the Jodhpur district, Rajasthan), Svāhā (in Maheśvarapura, same as Māhiṣmatī, modern Maheśvara in Indore, Madhya Pradesh), Pracaṇḍā (in Chāgalāṇḍa, mythical), Caṇḍikā (in Amarakaṇṭaka, the source of the Son and the Narmadā in eastern M.P.), Varāroha (in Someśvara, possibly Somnath in Kathiawar), Puṣkarāvatī (in Prabhāsa, same as Somnath), Devamātā (on the Sarasvatī, river in the eastern Punjab running by Pehoa), Mātā (on the bank of the Pārā), Mahābhāgā (in Mahālaya, same as Oṃkāreśvara, or Amareśvara), Piñgaleśvarī (on the Payoṣṇī, the river

Paisuni, tributary of the Yamunā between the Ken and the Tons), Siṃhikā (in Kṛtāśauca, mythical), Yaśaskarī (in Kārttikeya, possibly modern Baijnath near Almora in the Kumaon district, U.P.), Lolā (in Utpalāvartaka, the river Utpalavatī, modern Vyapar, in Tinnevelly district or Utpalāvata or Utpalāraṇya, modern Bithoor, near Kanpur, U.P.), Subhadrā (on the confluence of the Son and Ganges near Patna), Mātā Lakṣmī (in Siddhapura, either Siddhaur near Barabanki in U.P. or Sidpur about sixty-four miles from Ahmedabad), Aṅganā (in Bharatāśrama, mythical), Viśvamukhī (in Jālandhara, in the Punjab), Tārā (on the Kiṣkindhyā hill, in Andhra Pradesh, or modern Kekind in Jodhpur), Puṣṭi (in Devadāruvana, in the region of Badrinath in the Himalayas on modern Aundh in the Deccan), Medhā (in Kāśmīra), Bhīmā (on the Himalayas), Puṣṭi or Tuṣṭi (in Vastreśvara, possibly the same as Vastrāpatha or Girnar in Kathiawar), Suddhi (in Kapālamocana, identification uncertain), Mātā (in Kāyāvarohana, Kārvān in Baroda), Dhvani (in Śaṅkhoddhāra, the island of Bate or Beyt at the south-western extremity of the Gulf of Kutch), Dhṛti (in Pīṇḍāraka, near Dwarka), Kalā (on the Candrabhāgā, or Chenab), Śivakāriṇī (in Acchoda, modern Acchavat in Kashmir), Amṛtā (on the Beṇā, a tributary of the Krishna), Urvaśī (in Badari, Badrinath in Gahrwal, U.P.), Oṣadhi (in Uttarakuru, mythical), Kuśodakā (in Kuśadvīpa, one of the seven mythical *dvīpas*), Manmathā (in Hemakuṭa, somewhere in the Himalayas), Satyavādinī (in Mukutā, mythical), Vandanīyā (in Aśvattha, mythical), Nidhi (in the home of Vaiśravana, imaginary), Gāyatrī (in Grammar, imaginary), Pārvatī (in the company of Śiva, imaginary), Indrāṇi (in the world of gods, imaginary), Prabhā (in the solar orb, imaginary), Vaiṣṇavī (among Divine Mothers, imaginary), Arundhati (among chaste women, imaginary), Tilottamā (among beautiful girls, imaginary), Brahmakalā (in the hearts of men, imaginary) and Śakti (in the living beings, imaginary).

SOME IMPORTANT SITES AND TOPONYMS

About A.D. 1030, Albīrunī wrote: 'In inner Kashmir, about two or three days' journey from the capital in the direction towards the mountains of Bolor, there is a wooden idol called Śāradā

which is much venerated and frequented by pilgrims.'[49] The Śāradā-maṭha on the borders of Kashmir is mentioned in such other works as the *Śaktisaṅgama-tantra*.[50] The temple of Śāradā is also mentioned in Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*.[51] The ruins of Śardi, where it stood, lie at the confluence of the Kishengaṅgā and Kankotori rivers. The old shrine is substituted by the late Śāradā temple at Gusha which is now visited by pilgrims.[52] The temple of Śāradā has also been mentioned by Abul Fazl whose account of the *pīṭhas* or holy resorts of the goddess we are reproducing below.

> Nagarkot is a city situated on a hill; its fort is called Kangarh. Near the town is the shrine of Mahāmāyā [a name of the Indian Mother Goddess indicating 'the goddess having great magical power'] which is considered as the manifestation of the divinity. Pilgrims from distant parts visit it and obtain their desires. Strange it is that in order that their prayers may be favourably heard they cut out their tongues; with some it grows on the spot, with others after one or two days. Although the medical faculty allows the possibility of growth in the tongue, yet in so short space of time it is sufficiently amazing. In the Hindu mythology Mahāmāyā is said to be the wife of Mahādeva, and the learned of this creed represent by this name the energizing power of the deity. It is said that on beholding the disrespect [shown to herself and her husband Śiva] she cut herself to pieces and her body fell into four places; her head and some of her limbs in the northern mountains of Kashmir near Kamraj and these relics are called Śāradā; other parts fell near Bijapur in the Deccan and are known as Tuljā [Tūrjā Bhavānī]. Such portions as reached in the eastern quarter near Kāmarūpa are called Kāmākhyā and the remnant that kept its place is celebrated as Jālandharī which is this particular spot. In the vicinity, torch-like flames issue from the ground in some places, and others resemble the blaze of lamps. There is a concourse of pilgrims and various things are cast into the flames with the expectation of obtaining temporal blessings. Over them a domed temple has been erected and an astonishing crowd assembles therein.

> The vulgar impute to miraculous agency what is simply a mine of brimstone.[53]

Abul Fazl thus knew four holy places attributed to the goddess. The first one was Śāradā at modern Sardi in northern Kashmir of which we have already had occasion to refer. Abul Fazl has substituted Kashmir for Uḍḍiyāna. The second was Jālandharī near Nagarkot in the Punjab by which he has referred to Jvālāmukhī and not the neighbouring Jālandhara Pīṭha. The third was the Bijapur region, which may be same as Pūrṇagiri mentioned in the Tantras and the *Kālikā Purāṇa*. The shrine of Bhavāni stands at Tuljapur to the south of Osmanabad. Such was the celebrity of the goddess that when Śivājī built the fort of Pratapgarh, he set up there an image of Bhavānī, as the Bhavānī of Tuljapur was beyond his easy reach.[54] The fourth was Kāmarūpa, the seat of the goddess Kāmākhyā.

The *Kālikā Purāṇa*[55] refers to the temple of the Tantric goddess Siddheśvarī near Nandikuṇḍa, to the north-west of Kāmarūpa, that of Tripurā to the south-east of Kāmarūpa and that of the celebrated goddess Kāmākhyā. It also mentions seven *pīṭhas* associated with the limbs of Satī: Purṇagiri (neck and shoulder), Devīkūṭa (feet), Uḍḍiyāna (thighs), Kāmāgiri (genitalia), the eastern point of Kāmarūpa (navel), the western point of Kāmarūpa (head) and Jālandhara (breast).[56] According to the *Devī Purāṇa*,[57] in the tract between the Vindhya and Malaya, the goddess is worshipped as Maṅgalā, in the south of the Himalaya as Nandā, on the Kiskindhā hills as Bhairavī, at Kurukṣetra as Jayantī, at Kusasthalī as Rudrāṇī, at Jālandhara as Bhadrakālī, at Kolā as Mahālakṣmī, on the Sahyādri as Kālarātri, on the Gandhamādana as Ambikā, at Ujjayinī as Ujjanī, at Jambumārga as Mahākālī, in Videha as Bhadrakālikā, at Muṇḍipīṭha as Khaṇḍa-Muṇḍā, on the Malayādri as Aghorā, on the Laṅkādri as Kālikā, in Śākadvipa as Vijayā, in Kuśadvipa as Caṇḍā, on the Krauñca mountain as Yoginī, in Śālmaladvīpa as Varāṅganā, on the Mandara hills as Dhutimā, and in the Puṣkara as Nārāyaṇī. The *Devībhāgavata*[58] also gives an important list of the Śākta *tīrthas*. Such lists as found in the later Śākta Purāṇas are more realistic than the ones found in the earlier ones.

The Himalayan region is especially regarded as belonging to the Devī, since in Indian tradition, the goddess is conceived as Umā Haimavatī, i.e., the daughter of the Himavat. The *Vāmana-purāṇa*[59] mentions Umāvana, which is modern Kotalgad in the Kumaon region, as the resort of the Mother Goddess. where Śiva is said to have assumed the Ardhanārīśvara form. The celebrated site of the Kanakhala on the Ganges about two miles from Hardwar, where the sacrifice of Dakṣa was destroyed, is especially sacred to the goddess. Likewise, the Vindhyas have also been conspicuously associated with the Mother Goddess. We have already referred to the goddess Vindhyavāsinī, whose celebrated shrine is now in Mirzapur. The *Matsya Purāṇa*[60] as well as the *Devībhāgavata*[61] especially mention the Vindhyan region as sacred to the Devī.

In fact, in this vast country, holy resorts of the goddess are innumerable, and the popularity of her cult is proved even in the place-names of India. Referring to the Punjab region, Professor Niharranjan Ray[62] observed:

> Very few people pause to consider this social phenomenon, or to consider the significance of such toponyms in these regions as, for instance, Āmbālā which is derived from Ambā, one of the many names of Durgā, Chandigarh which is named after Caṇḍī, Panchkula (a growing village between Kalkā and Chandigarh), a technical term of unmistakable Tantric significance, Kālkā which is a vulgarisation of Kālikā, Simlā which is Śyāmalā Devī in its anglicised version. A careful and close look at the postal directories of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh would yield a long list of such toponyms from which one may draw one's own conclusion. Besides, throughout these regions one still finds a countless number of small, lowly shrines with all but shapeless or crude form placed on their altars which worshippers describe as Manasā, Caṇḍī, Kālī, Naynā, Durgā, etc.

The truth of the above statement can easily be understood if we take into account on the one hand the Śākta Pīṭhas scattered throughout the country and on the other the

place-names found in the Purāṇas which are associated with the Mother Goddess.

The *Pīṭhas* will be dealt with in the next section. Here we shall refer to a few celebrated sites which are traditionally connected with the Mother Goddess. The popularity of the goddess cult in Kashmir is amply testified in the statement of Abul Fazl who noted as many as twenty-two Durgā temples in different parts of this region. Kalhaṇa in his *Rājataraṅgiṇī*[63] says that the country of Kashmir is no other than Pārvatī herself. Besides, the holy sites of the goddesses Bhīmā and Śāradā, the *Matsya Purāṇa*[64] gives us a place-name called Trisandhyā which is regarded as the spring of the goddess Sandhyā. This is modern Sundabrar in Bring-Pargana. The present village of Isabar, two miles to the north of Dal lake, is known as Sarasvatī-kṣetra, sacred to the goddess of that name. Likewise, the Nepal region is traditionally connected with the cult of the Mother Goddess. Not only is it mentioned in the later Śākta Purāṇas like *Devībhāgavata*,[65] the earlier works like the *Varāha*[66] and *Vāmana*[67] Purāṇas mention this region as especially sacred to the Devī. The temple of the celebrated Tantric goddess Guhyeśvarī survives there even today. We have already referred to a few important Devī shrines of Rajasthan. The Puṣkara-tīrtha, which is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, as we have seen previously, is a celebrated site connected with the legends of Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī, after whom mountains are named. Six miles from Ajmer, this place is mentioned in such an early record as the Nasik inscription of Uṣabhadāta wherein it is stated that he made gifts at its three pools. Another important site is Śākambharī, also mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, named after the great Puranic goddess of the same name, which is modern Sambhar lake in Western Rajasthan on the borders of the Jaipur and Jodhpur districts. It is mentioned in the *Viṣṇudharmasūtra*[68] and also in an inscription of Cahamāna Vigraharāja dated A.D. 973-74.[69]

In the Deccan and southern India there are some celebrated shrines of the Mother Goddess. Of these, special reference should be made to Kolāpura, modern Kolhapur, where is situated the famous shrine of Mahālakṣmī. The *Bārhaspatya Sūtra*[70] mentions this place as a Śākta-kṣetra under the name Kollā, while the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[71] refers to it as Kollagiri.

The *Devībhāgavata*[72] mentions this place as one of the Devī-sthānas and the *Padma Purāṇa*[73] makes a clear reference to the goddess Lakṣmī enshrined here. According to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*,[74] it is sacred to Lalitā. In a grant of Śilāhāra Vijayāditya of A.D. 1143 occurs the word Kṣullakāpura which is another name of Kolhapur. The donor is described as 'one who has obtained the favour of a boon from the goddess Mahālakṣmī'.[75] In the Sanjan plates of Amoghavarṣa of A.D. 871, it is stated that the king, in order to ward off some public calamity, cut off his left finger and dedicated it to the goddess Mahālakṣmī.[76] The Kumārī-tīrtha or Cape Comorin is also a very important site of the Mother Goddess cult. Here is situated the temple of Kumārī Devī in which a fine image of the goddess is installed. Ptolemy mentions it as Koumaria while the *Periplus* refers to it as Komar or Komarei.

Like Kashmir and eastern India, different regions of South India became seats of Tantric culture. Tradition ascribes to Śaṅkara the installation of Śrīcakra in important temples. The most celebrated is that in the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñchi, known as the Kāmakoṭipīṭha. The Malabar legends as found in the *Kālikarpam* and the *Bhadrotpatti* associate her with the slaying of an Asura called Dāruka. In the Lalitopākhyana of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, she is identified with Mahālakṣmī, and according to the Tamil tradition, Pārvatī, having committed a sin by covering the eyes of Śiva, an act by which the universe was to perish, made a penance for six months on the bank of the Kampā at Kāñcipura, and since then the people of that region began to worship her as Kāmākṣī. According to another tradition, this goddess was extremely blood-thirsty, but she changed her habit, thanks to the efforts of Śaṅkarācārya. We have already had occasion to refer to the *Mūka* or *Devī Pañcaśatī* in praise of this goddess by a dumb (Mūka) poet who was said to have been gifted with the power of speech and poetic imagination by her grace. Apart from Kāñci, there are Śrīcakrapīṭhas at Courlallam and Avadaiyarkovil in the Thanjavur district. It appears that the Tantric *Kāyasādhanā* had profoundly influenced the conception of South Indian deities and their resorts. The nerve plexuses or lotuses of the body through which the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti reaches the *Sahasrāra* in the head are brought in relation to the holy places of the south.

Thus, Tiruvarur represents the *mūlādharā*, Kāñci the *nābhi*, Cidāmbaram the *anāhata* and Jambukeśvaram the *ājñācakra*.

Śrīparvata or Śrīśaila, a hill situated in the Karnal district on the southern side of the Krishna river, is also a famous centre of the Mother Goddess cult. According to the *Vāmana Purāṇa*,[78] the goddess Umā lived here for many years with Śiva. The *Agni Purāṇa*[79] says that here Gaurī performed penance having assumed the form of Lakṣmī. The *Bārhaspatya-sūtra*[80] describes Śrīparvata as a Sāktakṣetra. We have already had occasion to refer to the celebrated goddess Bhramarāmbā on the Śriśaila. The most popular goddess of South India in the late medieval period was Mīnakṣī. Her original temple was built in the early medieval age which was destroyed by Malik Kafur, the general of Alauddin Khalji. It was rebuilt by Tirumala Naik (1623-59). The city of Madurai is, in fact, the city of this goddess. The immense precincts of the present Mīnākṣī temple are dominated by nine exquisitely carved *gopurams*, the tallest of which is 152 feet high. There are many popular legends about Mīṇākṣī, one of which has a close bearing on the *Sillappadikāram* story.[81]

THE SAKTA PITHAS

The presiding deities of the *Pīṭhas* were originally local goddesses, and the story of Satī's death, the falling of her limbs in different places, etc., was obviously invented to bring all these goddesses in relation to the Śākta Devī. The *Mahābhārata* and the earlier Purāṇas make no mention of Satī's death. According to the versions of the *Devībhāgavata*[82] and the *Kālikā Purāṇa*,[83] Dakṣa did not invite Śiva to his sacrifice, and this humiliation led Satī, the wife of Śiva, to destroy her body. Other sources relate that Śiva became so inconsolable at the death of his wife that he took her dead body on his shoulders and travelled aimlessly. In order to save Śiva from this madness, the gods planned to cut off the dead body piece by piece. Parts of Satī's body thus fell at different places, and these places came to be known as Pīṭhas. Later accounts, especially those found in the late medieval Bengali literature, elaborated on this episode while dealing with the holy resorts of the goddess.

We have already seen that the *Kālikā Purāṇa* mentions seven *Pīṭhas*, while the *Rudrayāmala* mentions ten, the *Kulārnava* eighteen and the *Kubjikā* forty-two. The *Jñānārnava-tantra* has two lists—one containing eight names and another fifty. The second list was taken into account in the *Tantrasāra* which was composed about the seventeenth century. The Śākta *Pīṭhas* had become a popular theme of the medieval writers, many of whom took the greatest liberty in fabricating the place-names, the goddesses and their Bhairavas. The association of a holy place with one of Satī's limbs was determined usually by their individual imagination. This is clearly demonstrated by the sixteenth century Bengali poet Mukundarāma in the Dakṣa-Yajña-Bhaṅga section of his *Caṇḍīmaṅgala*. A list of fifty-one *Pīṭhas* is found in the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* or *Mahāpīṭhanirūpaṇa* section of the *Tantracuḍāmaṇi* composed about the closing years of the seventeenth century. It has been quoted in such modern works as the *Prāṇatoṣaṇī-tantra* (1820), the *Śabdakalpadruma* (1822-52) and others, and appears to have been used by Bhāratacandra in his *Annadāmaṅgala* (1752) and modified by the author of the *Śivacarita*.

Various texts of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* have been edited by Professor D.C. Sircar in his *Śākta Pīṭhas* in which the names of the *Pīṭhas*, the Pīṭha-devatās (forms of the goddess), the Kṣetrādhīsas (Bhairavas) and the Devī's *aṅga-pratyaṅga*, (limbs including ornaments, etc.) have been arranged in tabular form, and the discrepancies that concern them are also indicated. Here we shall not reproduce the lists. We shall only touch upon the important ones.

One interesting feature of the lists is that a good number of *pīṭhas* are situated in the rural areas of Bengal. Thus, the *Pīṭha* of Sugandhā, where the presiding goddess is Sunandā, is located at Shikarpur near Barisal; that of Vaidynātha, where the goddess is Jayadurgā, at the Deoghar-Vaidynanāthdham in the Santal Parganas; that of Bahulā, where the goddess is also of the same name, near Ketugram near Katwa in the Burdwan district; that of Ujjayinī, where the goddess is Maṅgalā or Maṅgalacaṇḍī, at Ujāni or Kogram in the Burdwan district; that of Caṭṭala, where the goddess is Bhavānī, at the Sītākuṇḍa on the Chandranath hill in the Chittagong district; that of Tripurā, where the goddess is Tripurā or Tripurāsundarī, at

Radhakishorepur in the Tripura state; that of Trisrotā where the goddess is Bhrāmarī or Amarī, at Salbari in the Jalpaiguri district; that of Yugādyā, where the goddess is of the same name, at Khirgram near Katwa in the Burdwan district; that of Kālipīṭha, where the goddess is Kālī, at Kālīghat in the southern suburb of Calcutta; that of Kirīta or Kirīṭakona, where the goddess is Bhuvaneśī or Vimlā, at Vatanagar near Lalbag in the Murshidabad district; that of Karatoya, where the goddess is Aparṇā, at Bhavanipur in the Bogra district; that of Vibhāsa, where the goddess is Bhīmarūpā, near Tamluk in the Midnapore district; that of Nalahāṭī, where the goddess is Kālikā, at Nalhati in the Birbhum district; that of Vakreśvara where the goddess is Manișamardinī, at Bakreswar in the Birbhum district; that of Yaśora, where the goddess in Yaśoreśvarī, at Iswaripur in the Khulna district; that of Aṭṭahāsa, where the goddess is Phullarā, near Labhpur in the Birbhum district; and that of Nandīpura, where the goddess is Nandinī, near Sainthia in the Birbhum district.

In north-western India, both Jvālāmukhī and Jālandhara, where the goddesses are Siddhidā or Ambikā and Tripuramālinī respectively, are mentioned in the lists of the *Pīṭhas*, the former lying in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. The latter, although it is the chief city of the Jullundur district, is located near the former. The *Pīṭha* of Hingula, where the goddess is known as Koṭṭavī or Kottarī (meaning a naked woman) is modern Hinglaj in Baluchistan. The goddess is locally known as Bibi Nānī, probably the same as Nanā of the Kushan coins. The *Pīṭha* of Śarkarāra, where the goddess is Mahișamardinī, may stand for modern Sukkur, the chief city of the district of that name in Sind. According to the *Pīthanirṇaya* the goddess is known as Mahāmāyā in Kashmir, but strangely enough there is no mention of the celebrated Śāradā and Amarnatha tīrthas of Kashmir. Likewise, the non-mention of Paśupatinātha, the most celebrated deity of Nepal, in this context, seems to explore the imaginary character of the description, despite the mention of Nepāla as a *Pīṭha* and Mahāmāyā as its presiding goddess. The *Pīṭha* of Mānasa, where the goddess is Dākṣāyanī, may be located near the source of the Sutlej, while that of Pañcasāgara, where the goddess is Vārāhī, to the five *Kuṇḍas* near Hardwar.

Of other *Pīṭhas*, the aforesaid text mentions Ujjayinī and Mālava, but it should be noted that the celebrated god Mahākāla is not referred to as Bhairava in connection either with the former or with the latter. Rāmagiri (modern Ramtek near Nagpur) is mentioned with Śivanī as its presiding deity. Lalitā and Viśalākṣī, the presiding goddess of the *Pīṭhas* of Prayāga and Vārāṇasī, seem to be adaptations from the earlier Puranic lists. The same holds good in the case of the goddess Sāvitrī of Kurukṣetra. At Utkala, the goddess is Vimalā and her Bhairava is Jagannātha. It is interesting to note that the cult of the latter, who is at present a Vaiṣṇava deity, is marked by some important Śākta-Tāntric rites. The Śākta claim on the Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* is also proved by the fact that Vṛndāvana, the celebrated Vaiṣṇava *tīrtha*, is described as the original resort of the goddess Umā. The *Pīṭha* of Gaṇḍakī, where the goddess is Gaṇḍakī-Caṇḍī, is located at Śālagrāma at source of the Gaṇḍak and that of Mithilā, where she is Umā at Janakpur in Nepalese Tarai.

Reference has already been made to the *Pīṭha* of Kāmarūpa where the goddess is Kāmākhyā. Of other seats of the goddess in eastern India, reference must be made to Jayantī, where the goddess is also of the same name. The *Pīṭha* is located at Kalajor-Baurbhog in the Sylhet district. The *Pīṭha* of Kanyāśrama, where the goddess is Śarvānī is located at Kumārīkuṇḍa in the Chittagong district and that of Maṇivedaka, where she is Gāyatrī, somewhere in Maṇipura. Of the *Pīṭhas*, of the Deccan and South India, the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* refers to Janasthāna and Godāvarītīrtha with Bhrāmarī and Viśveśī as the presiding goddesses. Śrīśaila and Śrīparvata (in the Nallamabur range to the south of the Krishna) are separately mentioned, but the non-mention of Mallikārjuna (Śiva) and of Devī Bhramārāmbā on the Srīśaila shows that the description is imaginary. That the writer of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* had absolutely no idea of South India is also proved by the non-mention of the celebrated Kāmākṣī of Kāñci, although Kāñci is mentioned as *Pīṭha* with its presiding goddess Devagarbha.[84]

Notes

1. III. 82 ff.
2. *Matsya*, XXII, 31; *Kūrma*, I.35.3; *Padma*, I.37.3.
3. III. 84.94-95; cf. *Padma*, I.38.15.
4. *Padma*, I.26.54; *Kūrma*, II.41.40; *Brahma*, CXII.1.
5. XIII. 26-54.
6. XIII. 38.
7. XVIII. 41
8. LXIV. 89-91.
9. VII. 38. 5-30.
10. I. 38.63.
11. CIX. 20.
12. XIII. 26-53.
13. XCVIII. 64-92.
14. XVII. 184-211.
15. VII. 30. 55-83.
16. Bagchi, *ST*, 38; Snellgrove, *HT*, 1,70.
17. 453, 455.
18. XIII. 46.
19. CIV. 80.
20. IV. 44.95.
21. VI. 4. 19-20.
22. XVIII. 42.
23. Sircar, *SP*, 94; cf. *IGI*, 297.
24. *BG*, II. 26.
25. *Ain*, II. 224.
26. VII. 38.15.
27. LXII. 2.
28. XVIII. 42, 50.
29. VII. 38.6.
30. Elliot, *HI*, III. 318.
31. XIII. 34.
32. *Padma*, VI. 110.5; *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.8; *Brahmāṇḍa*, IV. 5.6-10; IV. 39.-15; *Bhāgavata* X. 79.14; *Vāmana* CIV. 76.
33. III. 124.
34. CCXV. 93.
35. *Varāha*. CCXV. 38; *Vāmana*, CIV. 79; *Devī Bh.* VII. 38. 11.
36. IV. 44.93.
37. I. 32.4.
38. CXLVIII. 63 ff.
39. I. 92.166.
40. X. 34. 1-2.
41. *RT*, VI. 186.
42. *Varāha*, CXL. 4-5.
43. CCXV. 49, 106, 110.
44. II. 49. 28-29.

45. XXII. 69.
46. VI. 129.12.
47. XIII. 37.
48. Sec I; cf. Sircar, *SP*, 24-31, 66-70.
49. Sachau, *AI*, I. 117.
50. *IC*, VIII. 38, 49.
51. VIII. 2556, 2706.
52. Stein, *RT*, II, 279-89.
53. Jarrett's tr. II. 312-14.
54. Sarkar, *HA*, IV. 32.
55. LXXVII. ff.
56. XVIII. 42-51.
57. XXXVIII. 3-9; XXXIX, 1-5; XLIII. 64.
58. VII. 38. 5-30; IX. 1.
59. XLI. 36 .
60. XIII. 39.
61. VII. 30.8.
62. *SGSS*, 27.
63. I. 72.
64. XXII. 46.
65. VII. 38.11.
66. CCXV. 38.
67. CIV. 79.
68. LXXXV. 21.
69. *EI*, II. 116, 126.
70. III. 124.
71. V. 19.16.
72. VII. 38.5.
73. VI. 176.42.
74. IV. 44.97.
75. *EI*, III, 207-10.
76. *Ibid.*, XVIII. 235, 241.
77. Menon in *SKACV*, 234-39.
78. LXXVIII. 28.
79. CXIII. 4.
80. III. 124.
81. Whitehead, *VGSI*, 112 ff.
82. VII. 30.
83. XVI. 18.
84. For everything about the *pīṭhas* see Sircar, *SP*.

Appendix II: The Female-Dominated Societies

ECONOMIC BASIS OF SOCIAL DOMINATION OF THE SEXES

In the first chapter, we have been shown that the worship of the Great Mother, which is so prominent a feature of agricultural peoples, had its origin in female-dominated societies. The principles of the social superiority of the women seem to have developed particularly among agricultural tribes dependent on the economic role of women as the first agriculturists. It has been observed that the social supremacy of women is not found among peoples living by herding large animals, nor among those who live mostly by hunting. Again it is not found (though its relics are found) where food is grown by advanced techniques of cultivation. In parts of Africa, where the plough is a recent acquisition, the changeover can be seen taking place at the present day. Krige[1] writes:

> Now-a-days, this rule [that the soil is tilled by women] has been relaxed owing to the influence of the European civilization. With the introduction of the ox-drawn plough, men have come to do all ploughing, because women may not work with the cattle.

In Nigeria, where the transition is quite recent, it is due to the influence of the British officers.[2] This indicates a process which shows how with the changes in the mode of food production male-domination began to be imposed on social life step by step. But where agriculture predominated over hunting in

providing food, it accordingly raised the status of women, not only as owners and heiresses of the cultivable land but also through their traditional association with agricultural magic and religion.

ANTHROPOLOGISTS ON THE CONCEPT OF MOTHER-RIGHT

In 1861, Johann Jacob Bachofen in his *Das Mutterrecht*, on the basis of the evidence of matrilineal descent in ancient Greece, and among the primitive peoples of Africa, and the Americas, asserted that in the earliest stage of human history, a condition of promiscuity prevailed which was universally followed by mother-right. In 1865, John Ferguson McLenan set forth the same hypothesis in his *Primitive Marriage* (re-issued in 1876 as *Studies in Ancient History*). H.L. Morgan, in his *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1869) and subsequently in his *Ancient Society* (1877), formulated an evolutionary scheme which conceived of culture as having developed in a comparable manner the world over through successive stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization. On the basis of his interpretation of kinship terms as survivals of previous marriage forms, he contended that marriage was evolved from promiscuity through a series of progressive stages to monogamy, and that descent through the maternal line had preceded that through the paternal line, the former passing to the latter when property relations were established and paternity was no longer doubtful. The theories of Morgan subsequently determined the character of the important researches of Bandelier and Powell in America, of Fison and Howitt in Australia, and of Strenberg and other European anthropologists. His views of kinship influenced Rivers and Frazer. Marxist writers, with their insistence on interpreting evolution as a relative instead of an absolutistic concept, also depended on Morgan to show that private property and other things which are inalienable parts of the bourgeois civilization, cannot be considered indestructible: they are but parts of a process and not a fulfilment of it. The influence of Morganism is deeply felt in the works of Engels, Kautsky and Plekhanov. Morganism

has received a fresh momentum from the writings of Robert Briffault.

Many later writers, following Bachofen, McLenan and Morgan, held that mother-right was the natural consequence of promiscuity. The practice of counting descent, argues Bloch[3], originated at a time when absolutely no connection was known to exist between pregnancy and sexual intercourse. The idea that it is solely and exclusively the mother who builds the child's body, the father in no way contributing to its formation, is still found among some Australian and Melanesian tribes.[4] 'Paternity', remarked Sir Henry Maine,[5] 'is a matter of inference as opposed to maternity which is a matter of observation.' The less important fatherhood is in a society, the more that society will be driven to base its rights upon the mother.

The followers of Bachofen also assumed that mother-right had everywhere preceded father-right. 'It may be said without any fear of contradiction', remarked Sidney Hartland,[6] 'that while no case is known where matrilineal reckoning betrays evidence of having been preceded by paternal descent, the converse has been observed in every part of the world.' N.W. Thomas suggested that patrilineal descent might have been directly evolved without the intermediate stage of reckoning through females, but he seemed to consider it more probable that it had everywhere been preceded by female descent.[7] F. Graebner and W. Schmidt, on the other hand, believed that in most parts of the world, matrilineal migrants must have settled among earlier patrilineal peoples so that the main change had been from father-right to mother-right and not in the reverse direction. According to them, these types of settlements were responsible for the growth of various forms of intermediate stages between the two kinds of society which are found in so many parts of the world. O.R. Ehrenfels, whose work on Indian mother-right is a significant contribution, was also influenced by the migration theories of Graebner and Schmidt.

About 1910, W.H.R. Rivers[8] defined mother-right as a highly complex condition in which a good number of social processes were involved, e.g., descent, kinship, inheritance, succession, authority, marriage, etc. Distribution and varieties of mother-right in different continents of the world were also discussed, and it was claimed that the Iroquois, Hurons,

Pueblo and Seri Indians of the Americas and a few other peoples in different parts of the world had mother-right in pure form as the basis of their social organization. Copious illustrations of matriliny and matrilocal marriage were also cited, and it was concluded that in several parts of the world, we have definite evidence that a condition of mother-right had changed either into one of father-right or into a form of social organization in which social rights were recognized with the relatives of both father and mother.

But a reaction leading to another theoretical formulation against the concept of mother-right was gaining ground side by side. Westermarck,[9] whose basic purpose was to refute Morgan, made a violent charge against the validity of the hypothesis of mother-right, and his stand was supported, fully or partly, by a few leading anthropologists like Goldenweiser,[10] Horatio Hale[11] and Van Gennep.[12] The views of Westermarck were challenged by Briffault in his great theoretical contribution, *The Mothers* (1927). One of the strongest supporters of Morgan, Briffault marshalled on his side a mass of data, far more copious and concrete than had ever been adduced against him. According to Briffault, matrilocal marriage is certainly suggestive of a higher social status of women and it is the original form of marriage union. The practice of matrilocal marriage is still found among a large number of peoples and it has left a clear trace of its former prevalence among all other peoples. Since man's period of growth is protracted, it was the females whose maternal functions placed them in control of the group. All the cultural traits including the habits, norms of behaviour, inherited traditions, etc., were formed and transmitted by women. Far from representing the constitutionally weaker sex, women are more powerful than the men and they were more efficient fighters, even distinguished by greater cruelty.

> The differentiation of the man as the warrior and fighter is certainly not due to any constitutional indisposition or incapacity in primitive women, but to economic necessities. While women are frequently known to share in the active pursuits of men, the constructive occupations which have given rise to the development of material culture belong, in rudest societies, almost exclusively to the sphere of women's

> work, and the men take no share in them. All industries were first home industries and developed therefore in the hands of women.

From Bachofen's striking formulation in 1861 to Robert Briffault's extraordinary publication in 1927, the concept of mother-right was accorded a special place in anthropological studies. From the time when the concept of mother-right was formulated, it was always assumed that the treatment of the subject lay in organizing all the available materials within one vast theoretical set-up, usually of an evolutionary nature. But with the decline of the evolutionist method of approach in anthropological studies, the classical concept of mother-right came to be treated with diminishing importance by the greater section of Western anthropologists. In 1926, Malinowski declared that the task of social anthropology should be aimed at understanding the nature of culture, rather than at conjectural reconstructions of its evolution or past events. It should be aimed at the explanation of the anthropological facts at all levels of development by their function, by the part which they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system, and by the manner in which this system is related to the physical surroundings. Following Malinowsky, Radcliffe Brown also defined a social system as consisting of 'the total *social structure* of society together with the totality of *social usages* in which that structure appears and on which it depends for its continued existence'. As his theory developed, he laid increasing stress on the comparative analysis of social structures as the primary aim of social anthropology. Speculations about the early origins of human institutions which formerly provided the main drive of anthropological studies have thus been abandoned. So far as mother-right is concerned, the recent trend, among an important section of the anthropologists, though not among all, is to insist on specialized analysis and comparison of existing systems and institutions like matriliny, matrilocal marriage and residence, etc., without bothering about whether these may be regarded as vestiges of the earlier presence of the said system.

FEMALE-DOMINATED SOCIETIES IN ANCIENT TRADITIONS

Ancient myths and legends and also those of surviving backward peoples present before us two striking pieces of imagination. One is that, in many of the cosmogonical myths of the backward peoples, the earliest human being was a female who became the mother of the race or tribe, having united herself with her own son. The other in that in the earliest period women were all-powerful and hence, in order to get rid of their domination, the males of the group made a conspiracy according to which they simultaneously made all their women pregnant. When all women became pregnant at a time, they failed to carry out their administrative responsibilities, and taking this opportunity, the males came to power. The first legend may have some bearing on the Oedipus complex of the primitive mind, on the later idea of the immaculate conception, and on numerous baffling myths of the Mother Goddess in which her consort is her own son, instances of which we have recorded here. As to the second, we can safely say that pregnancy is one of the main causes of the subordination of women throughout the ages.

Arrian said that Asia Minor had been ruled by women ever since the legendary days of Semiramis.[13] Probably in Minoan Crete, writes Hall,[14] women played a greater part than they did even in Egypt, and it may eventually appear that religious matters, perhaps even the Government, and the state as well, were largely controlled by women. The legendary Amazons were a people ruled by women who retained in their own hands the control of all public affairs.[15] Bachofen in his *Die Sage Von Tanaquil* refers to the exclusive matriarchy of the Etruscans. In China, as late as the third century of the Christian era, women could hold office and exercise administrative functions and that right did not disappear until the eighth century.[16] The Nue' Kum tribe were ruled by women and the supreme authority was confined to the female descendants of the ruling family.[17] In southern China, the Su Mu tribe was ruled by a woman, the office being hereditary within a sacred clan.[18]

Coming to Africa, we find that in Lunda, the queen-mother ruled jointly with the king[19] and the same was the case in

Benin.[20] In Urua, the king had to marry his sister or first cousin and the queen had to be consulted in all important matters.[21] Referring to the Banyoro kingdom of Central Africa, Roscoe[22] writes:

> Since the present king became a Christian he has had only one wife who, however, as she is neither his half-sister nor a princess, cannot take the position nor the title of the queen; and the rank is held by a princess who is only nominally the wife of the king.

A similar compromise was adopted by the Banyankole.[23] The Incas of Peru held that they descended from a mythical queen called Mamaccoya, the mother of the royal clan, and accordingly adopted the practice of dynastic incest which was the only means of combining a male succession with the original female succession.[24] The same method was adopted in Hawaii.[25] In Tahiti, royalty was hereditary through women and matrilocal endogamy was the common practice.[26]

In Egypt, the normal rule of inheritance was that the property passed from mother to daughter. Society and family was characterized by a distinct preservation of matriarchy, the prominent position of women and a comparative promiscuity in sexual relations. In questions of descent, the female line was accepted. The 'nomes' or primitive local totemic clans were maternal clans, or motherhoods.[27] Much the same was true of the Semitic peoples.[28] Ibn Batuta wrote that the women of Zebid did not follow their husbands and women in ancient Arabia were commonly the owners of wealth.[29] In the Old Testament we find that with the Hebrews the regular practice for the man was to 'leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife', that is to take up his abode with his wife's clan.[30]

Herodotus says that the Lykians reckoned descent in the female line.[31] Arrian says that the Karians observed matriarchal endogamy like the Pharaohs of Egypt.[32] Strabo says that amongst the Karians, Lydians, Mysians and Kantabarians, men were subject to female domination.[33] Polybius[34] refers to the fraternal polyandry among the Spartans and Aristotle[35] to the social and political supremacy of the Spartan women. The Greek gods and heroes are specially referred to by the names

of their mothers, as 'Apollo, the son of Leto', 'Dionysos, the son of Semele', 'Heracles, the son of Alkmena', 'Achillis, the son of Thetis' and so forth. Referring to the social conditions of the Heroic Age of Greece, Gilbert Murray[36] says: 'House and property belonged to the women, and descended from mother to daughter. The father did not count at least not primarily—in the reckoning of relationship . . . . The sons went off to foreign villages to serve and marry women in possession of land there.' 'It is certain', says Ridgeway,[37] 'that at Athens there had been a time when descent was traced and property passed through the females'.

The custom of the Lykians of tracing their descent in the maternal line obtained also among the Etruscans.[38] Uncertainty of the Latin nobility as to their paternal descent was shared by the kings of Rome themselves. Not only Romulus, but also Ancus Martius and Servius Tullius, knew their mothers, but not their fathers.[39] Among the Scandinavians, the kingdom passed to the daughters and their husbands as late as the eighth century.[40] Irish and Welsh divine and heroic groups were named after the mother, not the father. Matriarchal elements were very strong and pronounced in Celtic social and political life.[41]

Sir James Frazer holds that the kingship at Rome was originally a plebian institution and it descended through women, that the people who founded the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi were of the same plebian stock as the Roman kings, and that they worshipped a great Mother Goddess, not a great Father God. That goddess was Diana, the Latin form of the Greek Artemis. On the other hand, the patricians, who afterwards invaded the country, brought with them father-right in its strictest form, and consistently enough, paid their devotions to Father Jupiter rather than to Mother Juno.

Frazer also says that at Rome the Fliamen Dialis was bound to vacate his priesthood on the death of his wife, the Flaminica. The latter had originally been the more important functionary of the two and the former held office only by virtue of his marriage with the latter. He and his wife represented an old line of priestly kings and queens, who played the parts of Jupiter and Juno, or perhaps Dianus and Diana respectively. The custom which obliged him to resign his

priesthood on the death of his wife seems to prove that, of the two deities, whom they personated, the goddess was indeed the better half. At Rome, the goddess Juno always played an insignificant part whereas at Nemi, Diana was all-powerful. The superiority of the Flaminica over the Fliamen indicates that the divine originals of the two were Dianus and Diana rather than Jupiter and Juno; and further, that if Jupiter and Juno at Rome stood for the principle of father-right, or the predominance of the husband over the wife, Dianus and Diana stood for the older principle of mother-right, or the predominance of the wife over the husband.[42]

THE WOMEN'S KINGDOMS IN INDIA

Strī-rājya, 'the women's kingdom' is often mentioned in Indian literature. The *Jaiminibhārata* speaks of Praṃīlā, queen of the land of Amazons, who fought against the Pāṇḍava hero Arjuna. According to Hiuen Tsang, to the north of Brahmapura country, in the present Kumaun-Garhwal region in the Himalayas, was the Suvarṇagotra country (Su-fa-la-na-kin-ta-lo), the 'Eastern Women's country' where 'for ages woman has been the ruler, and so it is called the kingdom of women. The husband of the reigning woman is called king, but he knows nothing about the affairs of the state'.[44] This Suvarṇagotra country with its typical social system is mentioned in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*[45] and the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*.[46] The statement of the Chinese pilgrim seems to be supported by the account of the Nu-wang tribe of Tibet, said to have been ruled by a woman who was called Pin Chin.[47]

Hiuen Tsang also noticed another Strī-rājya, called by him 'Western Women's country', near Lāṅgala in the present Baluchistan region.[48] The same country seems to be located in Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsamhitā*[49] in the north-western part of Bhāratavarṣa. We have references to a Strī-rājya consisting of five lakhs of villages in the Maheśvara-Kumārika section of the *Skanda-Purāṇa*.[50] In Yaśhodhara's *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary on the *Kāmasūtra*[51] we have also reference to a Strī-rājya lying to the west of Vajravanta country. Vātsyāyana connected Strī-rājya with the Bāhīkas with whom it had certain customs in

common.[52] Chakladar thinks that in the *Rājataraṅgiṅī*, Strī-rājya is considered to have been lying in the extreme north-west which agree with the evidence given in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.[53]

Megasthenes heard of queen-rulers in the Pāṇḍya country, and it is interesting to note that the said country was in the Malabar region which had always been a matriarchal area. Arrian says that Pandaia was the daughter of Heracles who entrusted her with the sovereignty of the land in which she was born. According to Polyaenus her empire comprised 365 villages and it was the rule that one village should each day bring to the treasury the royal tribute, so that the queen might always have the assistance of those men whose turn it was to pay the tribute in coercing those who, for the time being, were defaulters in their payments. According to Solinus, the Pandaeon nation was always governed by queens.[54] The Newars of Nepal believe that their country belongs to the Kumārī (a young girl elected from time to time and worshipped as living form of Kālī or Durgā) so that the king had to take a fresh mandate from her every year to rule the land. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇā*[55] refers to a women's kingdom in north-west India and this is supported by the evidence of the *Mahābhārata*[56] which locates it to the north of the Himalayas near the regions inhabited by the Huṇas and Taṅganas. Strī-rājya is mentioned in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*.[57] The *Rāmāyaṇa*[58] mentions Strī-loka, the region of the women, as a country to the north-west of India.

MATRILINY IN INDIAN SOCIETIES

Many of the inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintia hills of eastern India trace their descent from an ancestress styled *Ki lawbei tynrai* (the root of the clan tree). From this root spring specialized clans called *shi-kur* and these are divided into sub clans called *kpoh*. The next division is the *iing* or family, consisting of the grandmother, her daughters and their children. *Long-Jaid na ka kynthei* (from the women sprang the clan) is the saying of the Khasis who, when reckoning descent, count from the mother only, and speak of a family of brothers and sisters, who are the great-grand children of one great-grandmother, the man being nobody. If he is a brother, he has to

become a member of the family or clan he marries; if a husband, he is looked upon merely as a begetter (*u shong kha*). He can take no part in the rites and ceremonies of the wife's family. Only daughters are entitled to share the property which belongs to the mother, the youngest daughter usually getting the larger share. The income from land belongs to the *Kur* (clan) which is divided among the constituent *iings* (families) in which the mother is the head and the only bond of union.

The Khasi, Synteng and Lynngam laws of inheritance are more or less same. In the matter of religion, the priest (*Lyngdoh*) acts as the deputy of the priestess (*ka-soh-blei*, *ka-soh-sla* or *ka lyngdoh*) and he has to vacate his office if he has no woman of the proper relationship to assist him in the performance of his sacred duties.[59] Among the Garos, all property goes through the women and the males are incapable of inheriting in their own right. The husband enters the wife's family and children belong to the wife's clan. The clans are divided into different houses called *maharis* or "motherhoods'. The father is more or less an outsider, but his sister's son *nokram* often stays with him to supervise his position among the kinsmen of his wife. This sister's son often marries his maternal uncle's youngest, that is inheriting, daughter and sometimes her widowed mother also. The mother appoints one of her daughters, generally the youngest, as heir (*nokna*).[60]

The Nayar joint family or *tarwad*, consists of a woman and her sons and daughters, the children of those daughters and so on. The son's children do not belong to that *tarwad* but are affiliated to the *tarwads* of their wives. When a *tarwad* grows unusually big, it often splits into smaller family units called *tavazhis*. The *tavazhi*, in the same way, is constituted of a female, her children and all her descendents in the female line (*ta* is 'mother' and *vazhi* is 'line of descent'). The property of the *tarwad* is divided equally among all the *tavazhis* into which it is split up. The strength of this matrilineal joint family is mainly due to the typical form of matrilocal marriage current among them. Nayar women are entitled to keep more than one husband, and this is possible only in a matrilocal residence, where husbands are occasional visitors only. Nayar marriage does not always turn out to the permanent, because the *sambandham* (the term by which the Nayar marriage is generally

known) in itself, though recognized as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. It is dissoluble at will, either of the partners having the right to break off the relation at any moment. Thus the children born of *sambandham* belong to their mother's *tarwad* and inherit from the mother.[61]

We have seen that among the Khasis and some other tribes, succession passes from mother to daughter, as among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona. This is the original form of matrilineal inheritance. Gradually, however, the women's function is deputed to men, either the brother as among the Iroquois, or the husband, as in the Roman monarchy. Succession then passes from man to man, but in the *female* line, from mother's brother to sister's son or from father-in-law to son-in-law. In Melanesia, 'the closest relationship, according to the native customs, is that which exists between the sister's son and the mother's brother, because the mother who transmits kinship is not able to render the services which a man can give'.[62] In the *Mahābhārata*,[63] it is stated that among the Āraṭṭas and Bāhīkas, the sister's son inherits the property of his maternal uncle. The kings of Travancore followed the *alia-santana* (from mother's brother to sister's son) system of inheritance. A considerable number of tribes and castes of Kerala are known to have followed the system of matrilineal inheritance. Among them mention may be made of Ambattan, Ampalavasi, Chakkyar, Kavati, Krishnavakkar, Kuduni, Kurava, Kurukal, Malayarayan, Maravan, Malayali, Paliyan, Panan, Paravan, Pattaria, Pushpakan, Parayan, Pulayan, Samantan, Ulladon, Variyar, Villas, Visavan and others.[64] Matrilineal inheritance also prevails among the Agasa, Bedar, Bestha, Gudigara, Helava, Holeya, Kumbara, Madiga, Nattuvan and Vannan of Mysore.[65] Among the other tribes and castes of southern India following matrilineal inheritance, reference may be made to the Cheruman, Gauda, Kallan, Kalasi, Koraga, Kottai Vellala, Kannuvan, Mali, Mannan, Mappila, Tiyan, Wyena and others.[66] The Bedias or Berias of the Madhya Pradesh follow the matrilineal mode of inheritance and this also holds good in the cases of the Halabas, Kaikaris, Kurmis, Mangs, Rajjhars and others.[67] The Oraons and Santals allow their son-in-law to inherit the father-in-law's property. If he inherits, the first son will be named after the maternal

grandfather and not after the paternal. Among the Mundas, permanent matrilocal marriage is common; the son-in-law becomes a member of the family, and succeeds to a portion of his father-in-law's inheritance.

MATRILOCAL MARRIAGE IN INDIA

We have seen that among the Khasis, Garos, Nayars and a few other peoples, matrilineal inheritance is mainly due to the typical form of matrilocal marriage current among them. Among the Badagas it is very common for the would-be bridegroom to serve in the household of his would-be father-in-law, just as Jacob did to Laban, as one of the family members till the girl comes of age, when the marriage is consummated and he becomes a partner in the general property of his father-in-law. The Badaga woman can change husbands as often as she pleases by a simple system of divorce. Remarriage of widows are very common, and the widow may marry the brother of the deceased husband.[68] Such a system is found among numerous tribes and castes of India, especially among those whom we have referred to in connection with matrilineal inheritance.

Where inheritance is matrilineal on account of matrilocal marriage and residence, the mother's brother naturally becomes the key-person, as we find among the Bhondari, Bonthuk, Dandasi, Jalari, Jogi, Kadir, Maravan, Muka-dora, Parayan, Toreya, Tottiyan, Tsakala, Uppara, Balija, Banajiga, Ganga-dikara Okkalu, Ganiga, Golla, Halikar, Okkaliga, Holeya, Idiga, Kilekyata, Komati, Koracha, Kumbara, Madiga, Mandaru, Sadaru, Tigara, etc., of Southern India, the Bhunjia, Camar, Gowari, Gond, Halaba, Kamar, Kaikaris, Kurmis, Mali, Mangs, Rajjhars and others of Madhya Pradesh, and a few other tribes and castes scattered in different parts of India. Specially important in this connection is the survival of the custom of marrying the daughter of one's maternal uncle in some regions of South India which is even mentioned in the Brahmanical law books.[69] Among the Halabas and Kadirs marriage with maternal uncle's daughter is always preferred.[70]

This custom is called *menarikam* in different parts of South India.

Relics of the ancient custom of sister-marriage, once very common in Egypt, are found in ancient Indian texts. It is an incipient form of matrilocal marriage and connected with matrilineal inheritance.[71] In the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*[72] we find that Ambikā was originally the sister of Rudra, just as Hera was the sister of Zeus and Isis the sister of Osiris. According to the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*[73] and the *Mahāvastu*,[74] the Śākyas used to marry their sisters. The commentary on the *Suttanipāta*[75] refers to the Śākyas who were rebuked by the Koliyans for cohabiting like dogs with their own sisters. In the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, Sītā is represented as the sister as well as the wife of Rāma. According to the Cylonese *Mahāvamsa*,[76] Sīhavāhu, king of Vaṅga and Rāḍha, married his sister Sīhasivalī. According to the Jain *Āvaśyaka Cūrṇi*,[77] king Uṣabha married his own sister and king Puṣpaketu allowed his son to marry his own sister in accordance with the custom prevalent in the Golla country.

Sexual freedom of women is a natural concomitant of matrilocal marriage and so is polyandry. The *Mahābhārata*[73] says that the women of the Āraṭṭas, Bāhīkas, Madrakas and Sindhu-Sauvīras had sexual freedom. It also refers to the sexual freedom of the Utsava-Saṅketas,[79] of whom Nilakaṇṭha writes: *Utsavasaṅketaṃ strīpuruṣayoḥ ratyartham saṅketaḥ. Na tu dāmpatyavyavasthā. Paśūnāmiva yatrāstītyarthaḥ.* In the *Mahābhārata*[80] it is also said that Dīrghatamas established the law that every woman would have to adhere to one husband for her life. In the Pāṇḍu-Kuntī discourse[81] we find that women formerly were not loyal to their husbands and yet they were not regarded as sinful. It was Śvetaketu, son of Uddālaka, who introduced the patriarchal form of marriage. The legend of Gālava and Mādhavī[82] also points to a time when the ideals of patrilocal marriage, especially the concept of female chastity and others, were not ingrained in social life. Draupadī's polyandrous marriage was not an isolated event in the *Mahābhārata*, which also refers to Jaṭilā, belonging to the Gautama lineage, who was wife of seven persons, and Vārkṣī, who was the wife of ten brothers of the Praceta clan.

Polyandry is found among the Kallan of Madura, the Kaniyan and the Mannan, the Mudvar and Tottiyan peasants

of Kerala as well as among the Telugu Kapu or Reddi, and its relics are found among the Bagada peasants of the Nilgiri hills, the Cheruman or Pulayan, the Telugu Jogi, the Kanarese Kappilian peasants, the Khond and the Nayadi peasants.[83] In Madhya Pradesh its relics are found among the Bhuiya, Bari, Chamar, Gowri, Karku and other tribes and castes.[84] Among the Jadams of Hosangabad,[85] the Gujars,[86] the Eastern Jats[87] and a few other peoples, relics of polyandry are still found. Tibetan polyandry has been mentioned almost in every reference to that country. In Lahul, polyandry is a recognized institution. It is likewise general in Saraj, the Simla hills and the Manaur district of Upper Sutlej. Polyandry was once general in Hindukush and Chitral, says Biddulph,[88] and his view is supported by the testimony of the eleventh century Arab traveller, Al-Bīrūnī. Some patriarchal people are also polyandrous, like the Todas of the Nilgiri hills, who practise the custom of female infanticide.

The Asura form of marriage is also a relic of matrilocal marriage. In patrilocal marriages, the *paṇa* or dowry is taken by the kinsmen of the bridegroom. In matrilocal marriage, the reverse is the case. The Vedic peoples, who were basically patriarchal, did not hold this form of marriage in esteem. The son-in-law in such case was described as *Vijāmātā* or disreputable.[89] In the epics we find that, Kaikeyī, Gāndhārī and Mādrī were married against a heavy bride price paid to their guardians. In Jain texts, we have numerous references to the Asura form of marriage.[90]

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SANKHYA

In Sāṅkhya philosophy, *Prakṛti* is conceived as the primordial matter and also as the all-pervading Female Principle. There is also the conception of *Puruṣa* or the Male Principle which was later identified with soul, probably due to the influence of Vedānta. The relation between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* is explained in terms of that between a man and woman.

Just as a dancing girl, after showing performances desists

> from dancing, so does *Prakṛti* desist, after exhibiting herself to *Puruṣa*.[91]

As the birth of a child proceeds from the union of the male and female so the production of creation results from the union of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. But although *Puruṣa* or the Male Principle has a place in the Sāṅkhya, it is highly anomalous. *Puruṣa*, here, is not one, but many. It is indifferent, inactive, subordinate and nothing but a passive spectator.

If creation is made possible by the union of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, how is it that the role of *Puruṣa* is so insignificant? Or, if *Puruṣa* is so insignificant and inactive how is it that he takes so important a part in the affair of creation. This contradiction was taken into account by the great ancient philosopher Śaṅkara who remarked: *Kathañcodāsīnaḥ Puruṣaḥ pradhānam pravartayet*? Of the modern authorities, Garbe[92] writes:

> What place, however, in a system which holds such views, is to be found for the *Puruṣa*? Strangely enough, former scholars who made exhaustive investigations into the Sāṅkhya system did not succeed in answering the question. They regard the *Puruṣa* in this system as entirely superfluous, and hold that its founder would have shown himself much more logical if he had altogether eliminated it.

The origin of the anomalous position of the *Puruṣa* in the Sāṅkhya may presumably be traced to the anomalous position of the males in a matriarchal society where the mother is the head and the only bond of union of the family, the father or husband being no more than a stranger to his wife's people. Just as a child in such a society has no real kinship with the father, so also the universe, in spite of its being real, has no real relationship with the *Puruṣa*. In a matriarchal system, the father has something to do in the matter of procreation, but in the family he is an insignificant and passive spectator, exactly like the *Puruṣa* of the Sāṅkhya.

The root of the Sāṅkhya philosophy is not to be found in the Vedas. It must be sought elsewhere, obviously in some non-Vedic matriarchal tradition of India. The conception of a material *Prakṛti* which developed in the early agricultural

societies of India was evolved from the conception of a material Earth Mother supposed to represent the forces that stimulate the generative powers of nature. Magical fertility rites, originally performed by women to ensure the process of nature were inevitably associated with such a conception of a material Earth Mother. These rites, surviving throughout the ages in popular beliefs and customs, were conserved and crystallized in the Tantras while some allied speculations centering round the conception of a material Earth Mother later developed into a distinct metaphysical form, the Sāṅkhya system.

TWO IMPORTANT VIEWS

Indeed, only a predominantly agricultural country like India, with her stunted economic development accounting for the strong survival of tribal elements, is likely to be full of matriarchal relics. Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfels[93] observed that mother-right elements in India were stronger, both in extent and in degree, than those in any part of the world, and from this he asserted that a primitive form of agriculture, and along with it a form of mother-right, first developed in India, and this Indian mother-right appeared 'to have created the ancient matriarchal civilizations in the Mediterranean Basin, Oriental Africa, the Near East and specially Southern Arabia.'[93a] His hypothesis of India being the original home and migration centre of mother-right may not be correct, since he was influenced by the diffusionist tradition of Ratzel, Graebner, Schmidt etc., but the fact remains that the extensive survivals of mother-right in India, of which copious examples have been furnished by him, require positive explanation.

More important than all these are his observations on the violent overthrow of the ancient mother-right in India. According to Ehrenfels, (i) hypergamy was a means to subdue the female position in society by forcing upon her social inferiority in matrimonial relations. The principle of hypergamy in India was developed in the desire of a patriarchally organized people to force the idea of the superiority of men over women, whose spirit of independence and self-confidence was rooted in the old tradition of a female dominated society; (ii) The prevalence

of infant marriage in India is also subject to the same explanation; while (iii) the poor position of the widow, intensified to the extreme in the custom of burning her alive, has been evolved in the struggle between the originally matriarchal and the immigrated patriarchal system of society, as a means to subdue the former by the religious rules of the latter. Such extravagant means of breaking the resistance of mother-right was called for, parallels of which are, according to Ehrenfels, scarcely to be found anywhere else in human history. The special vigour to overthrow mother-right must have necessarily implied, as Ehrenfels claims, a corresponding social vigour which mother-right must have been enjoying since pre-Vedic days.

But even then, as Ehrenfels himself has shown, the matriarchal culture elements could not be stamped out from the lives of the masses. What could have been the reason for the extensive survival of mother-right elements in India? Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya[91] treats the problem from a strictly economic point of view and argues that, if the undeveloped agricultural economy had a natural tendency to create a female-dominated society and if by far the largest proportion of the Indian masses remained predominantly agricultural, it was but logical that the most extravagant methods would have been necessary to force upon them the supremacy of the male. He holds that because agriculture was the discovery of women, the initial stage of the agricultural economy created the material conditions for the social supremacy of the female. Thus mother-right in India was historically connected with the early agricultural economy, and that was, in all probability, violently suppressed in the subsequent days. Yet the peculiar tenacity with which the elements of mother-right have survived in the lives of the Indian people is quite striking. The probable reason is that the majority of them still remain the tillers of the soil. By contrast, the economic life of the early Vedic people was predominantly pastoral. This accounts for their highly organized patriarchal society with a characteristically male-dominated world outlook. It is here that we have the real clue to the basic difference between the two main currents of the subsequent religio-philosophical thought in India, the Vedic and the non-Vedic.

THE NON-VEDIC CURRENT

A predominant, if not the most conspicuous, feature of the female-dominated world view is Tantricism, with its supreme emphasis on *Prakṛti* or the Female Principle, which has characterized, as we have seen, all the major religious sects of India. This female-dominated world-view provides the only possible background to understand the sources of the widely prevailing Tantricism, of the Sāṅkhya philosophy which forms the substratum, of Tantricism itself, and of many customs and rituals associated with the cult of the Mother Goddess. The sources of all these are generally traced to a non-Vedic stream of thought, the existence of which is recognized in Indian tradition.

Many of the basic features of Hinduism come into view not in the *Ṛgveda*, but in later works when the Vedic tribes had long since amalgamated with other peoples and absorbed some measure of their culture and teachings. Whence these various elements came, and how they found their way into the fabric of the national religion of India, could not be satisfactorily explained until the dramatic discovery of the pre-Vedic Harappa civilization. The religious concepts suggested by the material remains of Harappa and Mohenjodaro are familiar to modern and post-Vedic Hinduism, but they are conspicuously absent in the *Ṛgveda*. The urban character of the Harappa civilization must have evolved through an agricultural economy, while the Ṛgvedic tribes, as we have seen above, were purely pastoral. Cattle-rearing being a masculine pursuit, all the pastoral societies were necessarily patriarchal, and this accounts for the wide influence of father-right on the society and religion of the Vedic tribes.

In many passages of the *Ṛgveda* occurs the word *puraḥ* or *pur*, signifying a rampart or a fort or a stronghold. It is interesting to note that references to such castles are generally found in the *Ṛgveda* in relation to the wars with the non-Vedic peoples. Indra shattered ninety such forts for his protege Divodāsa. He is frequently styled Asuraghna, the slayer of Asuras.[95] In spite of various theories regarding the identification of the Asuras,[96] it may be suggested that originally the word denoted the non-Vedic peoples of India. There appears to have

been three stages in the description of the hostile tribes of Asuras, Dānavas, Daityas and Rākṣasas in Puranic accounts. Originally these denoted human beings, the enemies of the Vedic tribes. Later on, these names became terms of opprobrium and abuse and finally they came to be associated with demoniac beings. The term Rāksaṣa is derived from *rakṣa* or protection. In the epics and Purāṇas we find them as the destroyers of Vedic sacrifices. It is not impossible that these peoples tried to save or *protect* the older religious beliefs and sentiments in this way and hence they were called 'protectors'. A typical form of matrilocal marriage is known as Asura marriage, and the fact that this form of marriage was condemned by the law-makers naturally gives rise to the supposition that this particular form of marriage originated among those peoples who were not Vedic. The Sāṅkhya philosophy in its original form was in some way connected with the philosophy of the Asuras. Kapila, the supposed founder of this system, is often described as an Asura.[97] The next Sāṅkhya teacher was Āsuri.[98] The name is derived from Asura, in which the suffix *sni* is certainly added in the sense of *apatya* or progeny.

The large number of phallic symbols unearthed from the various sites of the Harappa civilization prove that the cults of *liṅga* and *yoni*, characteristic of later Hinduism, had a pre-Vedic origin. In many passages of the *Ṛgveda*,[99] Indra is described as the destroyer of the peoples who used to live in fortified towns and worship *Śiśna* or the phallus. This fact is historically significant. In a number of Harappan seals and broken statuettes, a yogic posture is found,[100] which suggests the pre-Vedic origin of the later Yoga-sādhanā. In the *Kauṣitakī Upaniṣad*[101] Indra proclaims: *triśīrṣānāṃ tvāstraṃ ahanam aruṇmukhān Yatin sālāvṛkevyaḥ prāyaccham*. He has killed the three-headed son of Tvāṣṭṛ; he has thrown the *Yatis* before the wolves (one should not fail to recall in this connection that the figure on the Mohenjodaro seal which is supposed to represent a rudimentary form of Śiva is also three-headed). Now, who were the Yatis? In classical Sanskrit, Yati denotes an ascetic. The term is derived from the root *Yat*, to strive, to exert one-self, and is also connected with the root *yam*, to restrain, to subdue, to control. Thus, etymologically, Yati can only mean a person engaged in religious exercise such as *tapas*, austerities,

and *Yoga*. The hostile relation between Indra and the Yatis is also found in many other Vedic passages.[102]

On circumstantial evidence, it therefore appears that the pre-Vedic religion of India was mainly based upon a female-oriented world-view which was characterized by a cult of Mother Goddess, fertility rituals, and phallic cults offering a rudimentary form of Tantricism, and the practice of Yoga intimately associated with all these—all forming a typical religious complex which stood in virtual opposition to the one formed by the Vedic tradition. This explains why Indra is depicted as attacking and crushing the ancient Mother Goddess, plundering the fortified towns of the Śiśnadevas and throwing the Yatis before the wolves.

Garbe points out that in the *Mahābhārata*, the Sāṅkhya is considered to be as authoritative as the Vedas and that in the same text Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pāśupata and Pāñcarātra are excluded from the domain of the Vedas and described as independent branches of knowledge.[103] In spite of numerous references to Sāṅkhya in ancient literature, we know nothing of its original form since no authoritative Sāṅkhya text is at our disposal. However, the hypothesis of a non-Vedic origin of the Sāṅkhya may be substantiated on the following grounds.

1. The Sāṅkhya conception of *Prakṛti* or *Pradhāna* as the material cause of the universe is incompatible with the Vedantic conception of *Brahman*. Śaṅkara clearly states : 'It is impossible to find room in the Vedānta texts for the non-intelligent *Pradhāna*, the fiction of the Sāṅkhyas, because it is not founded on scripture.'[104] Sāṅkhya is the philosophy of the material first cause, whereas according to the Upaniṣads, the first cause is an intelligent principle which is absolutely non-material.

2. Greatest care is taken in Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahmasūtra* to refute the Sāṅkhya philosophy which is looked upon as the most important challenge to the Vedic system. Śaṅkara writes: *Kapilasya tantrasya vedaviruddhatvaṃ vedānusārīmanuvacana viruddhatvañca*, i.e., Kapila's doctrine not only contradicts the Vedas but also the sayings of those peoples like Manu who follow the Vedic way. Sāṅkhya is considered by Śaṅkara as the 'most dangerous adversary' and claiming to have refuted it, he says that 'by the conquest of the most dangerous adversary the

conquest of the minor enemies [i.e., other philosophical systems] is already virtually accomplished'.[105] Rāmānuja, the most severe critic of Śaṅkara, also agrees with his rival on one point, and the point is that the Sāṅkhya is anti-Vedic.[106] His point of argument is also the same: *Brahman*, the cause of the universe, is nothing but pure consciousness and therefore the material Prakṛti cannot be regarded as the cause.[107]

3. There had always been a conscious attempt to revise the Sāṅkhya in the light of Vedānta. The Sāṅkhya as presented in the *Kaṭha*, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Praśna* Upaniṣads and also in the *Mahābhārata*, is a hybrid combination of Sāṅkhya and Vedānta, and it is a deliberate contamination.[108] Vijñānabhikṣu, in his introduction to the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, does not conceal his desire to give the lost Sāṅkhya a Vedantic colour in the name of reconstruction, and that is why the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* is burdened with Vedantic elements and passages. Two other commentators on the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, Aniruddha and Mahādeva, were confirmed Vedāntists. How the Sāṅkhya was fabricated in the light of Vedānta can be observed if we take into account Gauḍapāda's commentary on the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*. One of the basic postulates of the Sāṅkhya is the conception of the plurality of *Puruṣa*. The term *Puruṣa* is generally interpreted as the conscious soul and in Vedānta this soul cannot be more than one. Without the transformation of the original doctrine of the plurality of *Puruṣa* into that of the non-duality of the same, the underhand conversion of original Sāṅkhya into disguised Vedānta cannot be complete. Therefore, in order to reduce the Sāṅkhya into a form of Vedānta, it is necessary to establish that *Puruṣa* is one, and not many, and Gauḍapāda has actually done it: *anekaṃ vyakatamekavyaktaṃ tathā pumāna naoyekaḥ*.[109]

Garbe is therefore quite correct when he says: 'Originally the Sāṅkhya must have taken up a position of direct opposition to the doctrine of the Brāhmaṇas, as is proved *inter alia* by its polemic against the ceremonial.[110] He also says that:

> The origin of the Sāṅkhya system appears in the proper light only when we understand that in those regions of India which were little influenced by Brahmanism the first attempt had been made to explain the riddles of the world and of our existence merely by means of reason. For the

Sāṅkhya philosophy is, in its essence, not only atheistic but also inimical to Veda. All appeal to Śruti in the Sāṅkhya texts lying before us are subsequent additions. We may altogether remove the Vedic elements grafted upon the system, and it will not in the least be affected thereby. The Sāṅkhya philosophy had been originally, and has remained up to the present day, in its real contents, un-Vedic and independent of Brahmanical tradition.[111]

Notes

1. *SSZ*, 190.
2. Meek, *SK*, 49, 61.
3. *SLOT*, 189.
4. Malinowsky, *SLSNWM*, 140-78; Spencer and Gillen *NoTCA*, 145 ff.
5. *DCLC*, 202.
6. *PP*, II.3; Cf. Bloch, *SLOT*, 197; Thomas, *SS*, 67; Lang, *SO*, 21.
7. *KGMA*, 15,
8. *ERE*, VIII, 851 ff.
9. *HHM*, I. Chs. 3-9.
10. *AA* (NS XIII), 603.
11. *S*, XIX, 30.
12. *MLA*, intro. XXXII.
13. *EA*, I. 23.7.
14. *AHNE*, 47 ff.
15. Herodotus IV. 110 ff. Strabo XI. 5.
16. Giles, *CC*, II. 197.
17. Gray, *C*, II. 307.
18. Gill, *RGS*, I. 365.
19. Cameron, *AA*, 157.
20. Roth, *GB*, 37, 119, 180.
21. Cameron, *AA*, 334 ff.
22. *SCA*, 172.
23. Roscoe, *Ban*, 59 ff.
24. Gambosa, *HI*, 123-24.
25. Jarves, *HHI*, 213 ff.
26. Ellis, *PR*, 99, 287 ff.
27. Breasted, *HE*, I 86, Petrie, *SLAE*, 109, 111, Erman, *LAE*, 92, Mespero, *LAEA*, 11.
28. Robertson Smith, *KMEA*, 74 ff.
29. *Ibid.*, 79, 117.
30. *Genesis*, II, 24; XXXI, 26, 31, 38, 43; *Judges*, XV. 1.
31. I. 73.5; Cf. *Iliad*, VI. 192 ff.

32. *EA*, I. 23; cf. Herodotus, VII. 99, VIII. 87 ff; Strabo, XI, 16.
33. I. 171; III. 165; VII. 74; IX. 16.
34. XII. 6.
35. *Politika*, II. 6.11.
36. *RGE*, 98.
37. *OT*, 198 ff.
38. Dennis, *CCE*, I. lv.
39. Pliny, II. 141; XXXVI. 204.
40. Chadwick, *OEN*, 331 ff.
41. Mac Culloch, *RAC*, 222 ff.
42. See Frazer's *MOK*.
43. XXII.
44. Watters, *YCTI*, I. 330.
45. Ch. LV.
46. XVIII. 57.
47. Sherring, *WT*, 338.
48. Watters, *YCTI*, II. 257. Beal *BRWW*, II, 277 ff.
49. XIV. 22.
50. XXXIX. 27 ff; Awasthi, *SSP*, 28, 48.
51. I. 249 (GOS).
52. *KS*, ed. Tarkaratna, 385.
53. *ABORI*, VII. 144 ff.
54. Majumdar, *CAI*, 222-23, 456-58.
55. LVIII. 39; Pargiter, *MP*, 375.
56. III. 51; XII. 4; Śòrensen *I*, 650.
57. IV. 173, 185, 587, 666.
58. IV. 43.20.
59. Gurdon, *K*, 62 ff., 120-24; Chattopadhyay, *KKSO*.
60. Playfair, *G*, 80 ff; Bose, *GLI*, 86 ff.
61. Thurston, *CTSI*, V. 294, 323; Mayne, *THLU*, 969, 976 ff; Panikkar, *SANL*, 264-71; Iyer, CTC, II. 49; Kapadia, *MFI*, 336 ff.
62. Codrington, *M*, 34.
63. VIII. 45-13.
64. Pillai, *CI*, 1931, Travancore, XXVIII, 371-402, Iyer, *CTC*, I. 28-29, 76, 98.
65. Nanjundayya, *MTC*, II. 3, 7, 108; III. 149, 247, 315, 332, 433; IV. 10, 138, 422.
66. Thurston, *CTSI*, II. 66, 296; III. 33, 73, 268, 424; IV. 119, 350, 440, 455; VII. 143.
67. Russel, *TCCPI*, II. 224; III. 139, 299, 394; IV. 65, 187, 408.
68. Thurston, *CTSI*, I. 77, 103 ff.
69. *Baudh*, *D.S.* I. 1 19-26; cf. Manu, XI. 172-73.
70. Russell, *TCCPI*, I. 145; Iyer, *CTC*, I. 6, 9-10.
71. White in *JHS*, XVIII. 265.
72. III. 59.
73. *DN*, III. 14.
74. Jones, *M*, I. 296.
75. I. 357; cf. *Kunāla Jākata*, (No. 536), 412.

76. VI. 36.37; Geiger, *MGCC*, 53.
77. II. 81, 178.
78. VIII. 40. 24 ff.
79. II. 28.16.
80. I. 104.
81. I. 122.
82. V. 105.
83. Thurston, *CTSI*, I. 63, 166, II. 68, 494; III. 73, 178, 215, 230, 356, IV. 350; V. 274, 477; VII. 178.
84. Russell, *TCCPI*, II, 224, 316, 406; III. 161, 557; IV. 142.
85. *Ibid.*, III. 219.
86. *Ibid.*, IV. 345, 350; Crooke, *TCNWPO*, II, 444 ff.
87. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, III. 36.
88. *TH*, 82.
89. *RV*, I. 109.2.
90. Jain, *LAI*, 156.
91. *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, III. 68.
92. *ERE*, XI. 191.
93. *MRI*, 18 ff; see especially 121-29, 201-04.
93[a]. *Ibid.*, 204.
94. *L*, 232 ff.
95. Cf. *RV*, VI. 22.4.
96. Dasgupta, *HIP*, III: 528 ff.; Ghosh in *IC*, VII. 339, in *VA*, 218 ff.; *ERE*, II. 157. etc.
97. *SBE*, XIV. 260.
98. *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, 70.
99. VII. 27.5; X. 99.3.
100. Marshall, *MIC*, I. 53-54; Vats, *EH*, I. 129-30; Wheeler, *IC*, pl. XVII. A.
101. III. 1.
102. *Taitt. Sam.* II. 5.1.1; III. 3.7.3; *Ait. Br.* VII. 28; *Śat. Br.* I. 2.3.2; XII. 7.1.1; *Pañc. Br.* XIV. 11.28; etc.
103. *ACOPVMCSS*, XX-XXI.
104. *Śār. Bh.*, I. 1.5.; *SBE*, XXXIV. 47.
105. *SBE*, XXXIV, 318-19.
106. *Śrībhāṣya*, I. 1.5.
107. *SBE*, XLVIII. 201.
108. Belvalkar and Ranade, *HIP*, II, 414, 417.
109. *Sāṅkhyakārikābhāṣya*, XI.
110. *ERE*, XI. 189.
111. *ACOPVMCSS*, XX-XXI.

Appendix III: Fertility Rites as the Basis of Tantricism

PROLOGUE: THE TANTRIC SEX RITES

We have already referred to a good number of sexual rites in connection with the Mother Goddess cult, and given some idea about Tāntricism, its making way into different religious systems, its principles and practices. We have seen that in Tantra, supreme importance is attached to *maithuna* or sexual intercourse which is often viewed in terms of a psycho-physical process. The *Kaulāvalinirṇaya*,[1] for example, states that, of the five M's—*madya* (wine), *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (cereals) and *maithuna* (sexual union)—the last one is the most important because this alone helps the aspirant to achieve his end. The performance of the sexual act should follow a ritual process involving *nyāsa*, *mantras*, etc., and the semen should be discharged with the utterance of a prescribed formula. A reverse process can also be practised by giving the semen an upward motion so that it reaches the highest cerebral point. Such arresting the flow of semen is variously known as *vajroli*, *sahajoli*, *amaroli*, etc. The aforesaid text[2] refers to *Cakrapūjā*, in which an equal number of men and women should secretly meet at night in a circle (*cakra*) and, selecting partners from among themselves, indulge in sexual acts in front of a *yantra* or mystic diagram representing the Mother Goddess. Such practices are still current in many parts of India, e.g., Lājadharma, popular among some groups of Rajasthan, or Colimārga practices of the Himalayan region.

The *Kathāsaritsāgara* describes a queen performing rites standing naked in a *maṇḍala*.

From a historical point of view, there is no difficulty in establishing the fact that from time immemorial, sex rites had a high survival-potential and they were popular among different religious groups. The primitive worship of the Mother Goddess with meat and wine, two of the five M's of the Tantras, is seen in the *āryāstava* of the *Harivaṃśa* and also in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.[3] Sexual orgies, practised by the Kaulas, Kāpālikas, Gāṇapatyas and others are known from literary accounts. According to the *Bṛhaspatisūtra*[4] the Kāpālikas believed in salvation through the sexual company of women. Writers like Kṣemendra, Yaśastilaka, etc., refer to the practices of the Kaula-worshippers who played the role of Śiva as united with Pārvatī and exhibited the yoni-mudrā. Ānandagiri refers to the Gāṇapatyas indulging in wine and sex. The Nāthapanthīs, the Sahajiyās and the followers of Tāntric Buddhism practised sexual exercises and believed in *bindusiddhi* or the Yogic control of the semen during the sexual acts.

In the Indian tradition the ritual copulation of deities is significant. Reference has already been made to the figures of the nude goddesses, with the sexual triangle emphasized, found in various Indian sites of the first-second centuries A.D. In the early medieval period, nude goddesses were worshipped at Alampur, Māhakuṭeśvara, Aihole, Bhinmal and other places. Gaṇeśa, along with his Śakti, in his ithyphallic aspect and touching the *yoni* of his consort, is still worshipped in the Nageśvara temple at Kumbhakonam. Ithyphallic Śiva is still shown in erotic play with Umā in numerous places of eastern India.[5] The worship of yab-yum, i.e., the goddess in sexual company of the god, and liṅga and yoni, i.e., male and female genital organs, are features of living Hinduism. The idea of sacred union of god with woman or goddess with man is still current.

The Tantric works of the medieval and late-medieval period are burdened with sophisticated philosophical notions with the help of which the original Tantric practices are sought to be explained. As a distinct ethico-philosophical system, the origin and development of Tantricism is a matter of special enquiry and study which is beyond the scope of the present

work. Here our purpose is to find the material basis of one single aspect of Tantricism, namely, the sexual elements, by which Tantra is practically saturated.

FERTILITY RITES OF THE VEDIC AGE

Fertility rites and beliefs of the primitive people who are mentioned in Indian literary tradition—Sabaras, Barbaras, Pulindas, etc.—which have been categorically linked with the cult of the Mother Goddess in the Purāṇas, evidently formed the sub-strata of the orgiastic rites of the Tantras. We have seen that behind all fertility rituals works the belief in the magical power of sex as the driving force. It is conceived as a creative principle capable of generating life, rejuvenating natural forces and revivifying things. In the Vedic literature, especially in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, we come across references to sexual rites and beliefs, to which we have already had occasion to refer. The early Vedic tribes, whose material culture and social institutions have been reflected in the *Ṛgveda*, were predominantly, if not exclusively, pastoral. As soon as they reached the second, or higher, pastoral grade, when stock-raising was supplemented by agriculture, they accustomed themselves to the agricultural rituals of their neighbouring tribes which were based on fertility beliefs. The adoption of the rituals of a particular group of people by another group is essentially connected with the social changes caused by the shifting tensions in the primitive mode of food production.

That the Vedic *Yajñas* or sacrifices were originally magical has been proved by competent Vedic scholars. A study of the Vedic Yajñas reveals the fact that, despite later sophistication and fabrication, basically they were simple folk rituals connected with the conception of fertility.[6] We may begin with the ceremonial of royal inauguration called Aśvamedha or horse-sacrifice which has come down to us in a political veneer and was looked upon as the only touch-stone to test the might of the kings. But its original purpose was definitely forgotten. The details of the Aśvamedha, referred to in the Śrautasūtras,

sufficiently prove that its central ritual was the union of the queen with the horse.

From the accounts given in the Śrautasūtras at least two significant features of the Aśvamedha may be derived at a glance: (i) Women in general, and queens in particular, had to play a very important part in the function. It was compulsory for the queens to stay in the sacrificial hall. Their attendants represented women of different classes coming from different strata of society. On the horse's return to the sacrificial ground, the queens had to conduct everything. When the horse was killed they had to go around it and observe ceremonial mourning. Finally the chief queen had to unite with the dead horse. They had to enter, along with their young female attendants, into an 'obscene abusive dialogue' with the priests. (ii) The *mantras* recited in connection with the Aśvamedha were all quoted from the *Ṛgveda*, the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* and the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*.

This is a *subsequent* form of the ceremonial, but the *original* form may easily be reconstructed from the *mantras* uttered in connection with it, especially from the so-called 'obscene abusive dialogue' (*Vāj. Sam.*, XXII-XXIII) forming part of the *maṇtras*. They narrate an event of the earlier tradition, the original rite itself, which was subsequently mimed in the horse-sacrifice. From the evidence furnished by the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, it becomes clear that the union of the principal queen with the dead horse is a relic, or rather a transformation, of an older ritual, in which a man, evidently a priest, had to play the part of the horse and, after his ceremonial intercourse with the queen, he was probably put to death.[7] This sexual intercourse between the priest and the queen is significantly brought in relation to the act of sowing in the field: *yathā kṛṣivalaḥ dhānyaṃ vāte śuddhaṃ kurvan grahaṇamokṣau jhaṭiṭi karoti.* Elsewhere we have seen that in post-Ṛgvedic literature, sexual union is identified with sacrifice. The aforesaid ritual reminds us of Frazer's dying-god theme according to which the killing of the king or the priest was originally nothing but an incident in the women's ritual cycle. Thomson writes:

> It was necessary for the queens to conceive in order that the earth might bear fruit. Their sexual life was a cycle of

mimetic magic. Accordingly, the procreation was imagined as a god in the first instance, no doubt, the god of the moon, which in primitive thought is the cause of pregnancy in woman and fertility in the soil and after serving their purpose the men in whom this god was embodied were put to death. They had to die in order that crops might live. This ritual, which inspired the myths of Ishtar and Tammuj, Isis and Osiris, Venus and Adonis, is the precursor of the Greek sacred marriage, in which it was adopted to the conditions of monogamy.[8]

The Mother Goddess is not directly mentioned in the textual passages relating to the Aśvamedha. She comes into view in connection with another important Vedic sacrifice which is known as Vājapeya, or the rituals of food and drink. According to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,[9] an individual can obtain the results of this sacrifice by performing sexual intercourse according to the rules. Since Vājapeya means 'food and drink' there is no difficulty in thinking that by sexual union, as the said Upaniṣad suggests, one is entitled to get food and drink. In other words, here sexual union is regarded as a means, or rather a technique, of food production. Though in subsequent ages the purpose of Vājapeya was changed, it was originally an agricultural ritual, as Keith[10] points out rightly. While dealing with the rites or Vājapeya, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[11] categorically identifies food and wealth with the Mother Goddess. The rituals of collective drinking and those of the chariot race, which characterize the Vājapeya, and in which a cult of the Mother Goddess is conspicuously present, have a clear bearing on the primitive concept of fertility. Frazer has drawn our attention to the fact that the great games of Greece were originated in funeral celebrations which were supposed to ensure plenty of corn, fruit, milk and fish.[12] In many cases funeral rites and fertility rites are closely linked up. The death and revival of plant life have not only given us a good number of primitive myths but also have contributed to the growth of the ideas of resurrection and rebirth and given rise to numerous cults and rituals in connection with the Mother Goddess.[13]

Fertility rites, as we have seen above, formed the sub-strata of the Mother Goddess cult which in its turn contributed to

the growth of a number of specialized rituals which were able to characterize the socio-religious history of India. They are conspicuously present in the grand sacrifices of the Vedic age, and their very presence helps us to distinguish between the original and fabricated forms of these ceremonials. It can be shown how the simple agricultural rites, originally based upon the primitive conception of the identity of earth and woman, became step-by-step class-oriented, how their original kernel was gradually discarded leading to the development of accretions which ultimately came to take the lead, and how the primitive productive techniques, by which the agricultural rites were characterized originally, having assumed a sophisticated tone and colour, became decorative features of royal ceremonies. The growth of these accretions may also be studied, as a result of which we shall be able to make a distinction between the original and sophisticated forms of the Vedic sacrifices or *Yajñas*, their genesis in primitive magical beliefs and practices, their getting ensnared by the logic of pure society, and their final culmination into a meaningless but profitable affair of the priests, kept shrouded in deep mystery and jealously guarded.

RITES DE PASSAGE

The peculiar tenacity with which the elements of fertility beliefs have survived in the lives of the Indian masses is quite striking. Such beliefs and practices are found abundantly not only in the collective or social rituals mentioned previously but in the individual rites concerned with birth, initiation, marriage, eldership, death, etc., as well. The decay and regeneration in nature have called forth the series of *rites de passage* at the junctions of individual existence to obtain a fresh outpouring of life and power. The transition from one grade of life to another is effected among the tribal communities by the rites of initiation at puberty, marking separation from childhood and entrance into manhood or womanhood. The qualification for admission into the adult group is not birth but rebirth. The idea of rebirth, which also characterizes the death rites, certainly owed its origin to the observation of plant life, its death and revival, and was definitely linked with the primitive beliefs

connected with natural and human fertility, to which the origin of the menstrual and sexual rites and other kindred features, associated with agricultural life, should be traced. The idea of death and rebirth in every turning point of an individual's life evidently contributed to the concepts of *Karma*, transmigration of soul, metempsychosis and so on.

The rebirth of the initiate is often represented dramatically by a magical representation of the act of dying and being born from the womb.[11] Here is an example from the *Aitareya Brāhmana*:[15] 'Him whom they consecrate the priest make into an embryo again.' He should be bathed in water (equated with *retas* or semen), anointed with *navanīta* or clarified butter (symbol of the embryo according to the text) and purified with *darbha* or *kuśa* grass. Then collyrium is to be put in his eyes, just as it is put in the eyes of the new-born. After this, the candidate will have to enter and stay in a hut shaped like a female organ (*yoni*). He should not come out of the hut and must not see the sun. He is to be covered at first with a cloth (symbol of the *ulva* or the placenta) and then with the skin of a black antelope (*kṛṣṇājina*, symbol of the uterus). So long as he stays in the hut, he will have to keep his hand clasped (*muṣṭi*), just as a child remains in the womb. When all this is done, he will have to come out of the hut still covering the body with that piece of cloth symbolizing the *ulva* because the baby comes out of the mother's womb under the coating of the placenta. This is how fertility beliefs work out in the rites of initiation. Traces of such beliefs are found in the sophisticated *upanayana* ceremony.[16]

Every religious system prescribes some sort of initiation as an introduction to the system of religious life. In many a backward society, still surviving in different parts of the world, a man cannot have any religious function unless he has undergone the necessary initiatory rites at puberty. Like the Brāhmaṇical *Upanayana*, the Buddhist and Jain rites of initiation were modelled on tribal puberty rites. The word *Upanayana* literally means 'the drawing near or leading forth [of a boy for study under the teacher].' The prefix *upa* is significant: it denotes something "secret" and has often some bearing on matters sexual. Many words beginning with *upa* are found in Sanskrit having both the senses contained in them. It appears that the present

grammatical derivation of the word *Upanayana* is based upon the changed significance of the original rite which had some esoteric elements.

In Tantric rites of initiation, however, the most primitive character of 'secrecy' is maintained. One should not fail to recall in this connection that in tribal initiation, it has been observed that the whole ceremony is secret, performed at a distance from the settlement, and often preceded by a probationary period of seclusion. When the novice returns to the settlement, he is strictly forbidden to reveal to the uninitiated what he had heard or seen.[17] The same holds good in the case of Tāntric *dīkṣā*. The initiated one must not reveal to any person what he has seen or learnt. Just as a man is expected to keep secret the illicit love affair of his mother (*mātṛjāra*), so also the initiated one is expected not to disclose anything about what he has seen or learnt during his initiation. That is why it is impossible to have a full view of Tantricism because there are many gaps which still remain unknown and will remain so, and the gaps are due to this secrecy. When an initiated Tāntrika himself writes a book on his subject, he maintains such gaps, commenting that these are not to be disclosed before uninitiated persons.

Initiation into womanhood is of more anthropological interest than initiation into manhood. The rites of the first menstruation are the most invariable and the most strictly observed of all the rites of primitive humanity. All the world over, not only among the primitive peoples, but also among peoples on a far higher cultural plane, the forms of rites attaching to the first menstruation are similar. In primitive belief, menstruation was thought to be the effect of sexual intercourse, and the latter was therefore accounted necessary for the establishment of the physiological function.[18] Hence, precocious sexual intercourse was not merely looked upon as permissible, but as indispensable, and was encouraged and enjoined. This may explain why ceremonial defloration is in many cases an important feature of the puberty rites of the girls. Traces of ceremonial defloration are to be found in the now obsolete ritual called *Caturthīkarma*. Among the Nayars, for example, defloration had to take place before puberty in

order that the girl may not be deflowered by the regular operation of nature.

In patriarchal societies, there is a deeply ingrained dread regarding the menstrual blood. Pliny's account of the dreadful effects produced by the menstruating women expresses substantially the beliefs which are current among most of the rural and tribal population of the world. Menstrual blood is also dreaded in the Mosaic Law Book of the Holy Bible, in the *Quran* as well as in the Brahmanical Law Books.[19] But this terror attaching to the primitive taboo on the menstruating woman was not, in the most primitive and original form of the conception, the deeply ingrained dread for impurity and unholiness. There are also many instances in which menstrual blood had developed a sanctifying and purifying significance. In the Tantras, it is regarded so sacred that it is prescribed as an offering to the great Goddess and her consort. The blood of a maiden is known as *svayambhūkusuma*, of a married woman *kuṇḍodbhava* and of a widow *golodbhava*. The first type is generally preferred. We have already referred to some celebrated goddesses whose supposed menstrual blood, symbolized by red water, are collected by the devotees for various fructifying purposes. As Thomson[20] rightly observes:

> There is no sphere of human life in which a greater uniformity can be observed than in the treatment of menstrual and puerperal woman . . . . Its potency makes it something to be dreaded . . . . From one aspect the woman who may not be approached is inviolable, holy; from another aspect, she is polluted, unclean. She is what the Romans called *sacra*, sacred and accursed. And hence, in patriarchal society, after woman has lost her control of religion, it is the negative aspect that prevails.

FERTILITY AND FUNERAL RITES

Sexual elements in the harvest festivals of the Hos of Chotanagpur, Kotas of the Nilgiri hills, Bhuiyas of Orissa and many other tribes have already been noted. Mention has also been made of the Śābarotsava, or festivals indicating

sexual act and vulgar gestures peculiar to the Sabaras, in connection to the Durgā worship. In other popular festivals of India, like the Holi or Dolayātrā, Kaumudī-mahotsava, etc., sexual elements have a significant role. Long ago, William Crooke pointed out that the festival of Holi was the natural outcome of the primitive sexual rites of fertility.[21] Hutton[22] categorically states that in the rituals of Holi sexual features are prominent, and he also explains these features in terms of the primitive agricultural rituals in which sexuality played a leading part. In some places, the festival is celebrated in honour of the goddess Vāsantī which was previously an occasion on which 'the most licentious debauchery and disorder reign throughout every class of society. It is a regular Saturnalia of India. Persons of the greatest responsibility, without regard to rank or age, are not ashamed to take part in the orgies which mark the season of the year.'[23] In ancient times, this festival was called *Vasantotsava* and the noblest princesses danced in public in honour of the goddess of love.[24] 'Most of the observers of the feast', says Natesa Sastri,[25] 'imagine that the object of their worship is Cupid and that the mock fun they observe are on account of Kāma, the god of love.'

The festival of Holi is celebrated on the full-moon day of spring. The full-moon days are considered suitable for such public festivals as the Rāsa-yātrā. Jhulana-yātrā, etc., the cult of the goddess of wealth and fortune, and so on. From the time of the *Ṛgveda*,[26] there was a mystical belief that the moon was the divine guardian of a girl, and according to the *Pāraskara Gṛhyasūtra*,[27] he enjoys a girl when she develops the signs of puberty. In primitive thought, the moon is not only regarded as the cause of conception and generation, but also as the regulator of the periodic function of women, the controller of menstruation and the guardian of the embryo and the placenta.[28] Since the moon is especially conceived as the source of magical powers and the cause of conception and generation, it is evident that the ideas of regeneration or rebirth and the rituals connected with them have some logical bearing on the functioning of the moon. The conception of rebirth is conspicuously associated with the moon, also because of its eclipses symbolizing death and revival. That is why during the eclipse

men usually follow the traditional customs which are connected with the event of a man's death in a family.

The Hindu religious calendar follows the lunar line according to which dates are prescribed for worship and ritual. The bright half (*Śukla-pakṣa*) is regarded better than the dark half (*Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa*) for such purposes. The birthdays of the celebrated saints are often conspicuously connected with the full-moon days. While the ceremonies of the full-moon are especially connected with rebirth, a new life, those of the new-moon are with death and funeral aspects. The night dedicated to the god Siva who with his followers lives in the places of cremation surrounded by ghosts and goblins belongs to the dark half (*Kṛṣna-pakṣa*). So is the rituals of Dīpāvalī which is observed on the dark new-moon night. In Bengal, this ceremony is associated with the annual worship of the goddess Kālī who has been always identified with death (*mṛtyurūpā*).

A close observation of the rituals of Holi will indicate that originally it symbolized the death and resurrection theme. The miming of the burning of the dead, the sexual elements and the ritual use of red powder, the colour of life, show, that the present form of the Holi festival contains relics of some primitive rituals connected with the concepts of death, fertility and renewal of life. In different parts of India, especially in many districts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa, fire festivals are held during the celebration of Holi, and the ashes thus produced from the kindling of fire are sprinkled on the ground for the multiplication of crops and fruits. Prof. N.K. Bose[29] connects the origin of the fire rites of Holi with such tribal rites as the Meria Killing of the Khonds. It was a human sacrifice for increasing the productivity of the fields. They believe that Mother Earth bestows power of life through harvest and that power of life can be returned to her by offering a fresh life, i.e., by a human sacrifice. Accordingly, the body of the victim was burnt and the ashes were sprinkled on the earth. This rite was also characterized by heavy consumption of wine and indiscriminate sexual intercourse, and this explains the relation between Holi and the sex-rituals mentioned above, relics of which are still found in the sexual gestures and obscene types of mock-fights, dances, songs and jokes forming essential features of the festival in different parts of the country.

Dīpāvalī or Dewali, which is characterized by fire festivals, was connected with death. The European fire festivals mentioned by Frazer were originally meant for commemoration of death at the root of which worked the belief in contagious magic, the belief that one event was likely to influence another. Otherwise it is not possible to explain the universal custom of lighting the candle on or around the tomb. Among the Muslims and Christians, this custom is widely in vogue as also among peoples of different sects. The flame of light is the symbol of relation with the dead or departed soul, and since this connection with death is direct, the relation of Dewali with the world of ghosts is close. This explains why the preceding night of Dewali in Bengal is called *Bhūta-caturdaśī*, the night of the ghosts, which is observed by lighting fourteen candles. Dewali was arranged to commemorate the demise of Mahāvīra, and since then the Jains have been performing this celebration every year on the day of his *nirvāṇa*. In this case, the Jains must have also followed an ancient custom, an ancient faith, according to which, there is an intrinsic connection between the dead and the flame of the lamp. Since this connection has long been established in human mind, the common custom is that when a man dies and his body is taken to the burning ground, a light has to be kept lighted at the place where he breathed his last. Likewise, when the image of any god is taken away for immersion, a lamp has to be kept lighted on the altar where the image was installed.[30]

THE RITUAL OF WINE

In Tantric tradition, the use of wine is well known which is one of the five M's. The ritual use of wine is a very primitive practice, originally connected with fertility magic. Drinking had always been an essential feature of the Vedic sacrifices. The common form of wine known to the Vedic people was *Soma*, which occupied a very important place in Vedic literature, being considered as a means through which men could overcome death and attain immortality.[31] *Soma* was also a Vedic god and the important rituals of this god (Somayāga-s) are quite well-known. Two other kinds of wine were

also well-known to them, *Surā* and *Pariśrut*, and these were used especially in the Vājapeya sacrifice. Keith rightly observed that wine in the said function was clearly related to the ceremonial rituals in connection with fertility magic.[32]

William Crooke has shown that the idea that liquor is the vehicle of magical power lies at the root of tribal rituals all over India, and cited numerous examples of the ritual use of wine for the purpose of ensuring the fertility of the fields.[33] Wine has a two-fold significance, one for the purpose of overcoming death and the other designed to ensure birth. That wine overcomes the contamination of death (Cf. the *RV*. passage: We have drunk Soma and become immortal) is evidenced from the funeral rites among the backward peoples in different parts of the world.[34] One of the commonest name for locally made wine in India is *mṛtasañjīvanī*, 'that which restores life'. The same belief probably explains the use of wine in the puberty rites, the essence of which is death and rebirth. Wine plays an important part in marriage rituals all over the world as an agent of procreation.[35]

The magical use of wine, so common in fertility and funeral rites, also finds expression in proletarian rituals like the *Gājana* of Dharma and other deities. A gigantic vessel of wine called *bhāṇḍāl* is brought in front of the deity. Smaller vessels are also brought. Dances are held around the principal vessel and the participants become quite senseless which is caused sometimes by pretension, sometimes by the actual intoxicating effect of the liquor. In many places, mock or actual fights are held among the participants for the possession of the vessel. In some villages of the Birbhum district of West Bengal the Dharma-stone is carried in procession to the house of a *Śuṇḍī* (belonging to the wine-making caste) who anoints it with oil and wine. At places again the actual task of brewing is performed before the god. Where Brahmanical influence is greater, milk is used instead of wine. Such wine rituals are also current in different parts of South India.[36]

FEMALE PRINCIPLE IN RITUALS

We have previously sought to prove that the Sāṅkhya philosophy

had a matriarchal background. There is also something in Tantricism which helps us to hold that it was originally the exclusive affair of women. A main feature of the Tantras is the higher standard to which they have raised womanhood. Śakti proclaims that in one sense she is manifested more in women than in men. When women are approached with reverence and awe, purity and devotion, they raise men to the standard of gods. In the *Devībhāgavata*, we come across such passages in which women, as manifestations of the great world-cause are entitled to respect and even to veneration: Whoever offends them incurs the wrath of *Prakṛti*, mother of all, whilst he who propitiates them offers worship to *Prakṛti* herself.[37] Herein lies the significance of Kumārī-pūjā or Virgin-worship to which the Tantras attach special importance.[38] 'Wherever gynaecocracy meets us', says Bachofen,[39] 'the mystery of religion is bound up with it and lends to motherhood an incorporation of some divinity.' Among the followers of the Tantra school, female shamans called *bhairavīs* and *yoginīs* still occupy an important place. The seven *padmas* or lotuses on the *susumnā* cord are nothing but seven seats of feminity inherent in every human being, and the Śaktis like Kulakuṇḍalinī, Vāruṇī, etc., residing in the lotuses are also conceived as female. Even in the so-called Vaiṣṇava Sahaja literature, the Kulakuṇḍalinī-śakti is conceived as Rādhā, that is, the female principle of the Vaiṣṇavas. In the Caryā songs, we find frequent references to this female force variously called as the Caṇḍālī, Ḍombī, Śabarī, Yoginī, Nairāmani, Sahajasundarī, etc., and we also find frequent mention of the union of the Yogin with this personified female deity.[40]

It is also interesting to note that, in the Tantras, women are given the right of initiating persons in matters of religious and spiritual practices. The high position of women in the Tantras goes against the existing Brahmanical injunction that a woman is never fit for independence: 'Her father protects her in child-hood, husband in youth and son in old age. . . . She has no business with the Vedas, thus the law is fully settled.'[41] The conception of *Dakṣināćāra* as opposed to *Vāmāćāra* seems to be a later development and it is possible that the first word in the expression *Vāmāćāra* is not *vāma* or left, but *vāmā*, woman. Actually there is no rightism or leftism in the Tantras.[42] Thus

Vāmācāra may be a woman's rite, a female ritual. R.G. Bhandarkar writes:

> The ambition of every pious follower of the system is to become identical with Tripurasundarī, and one of his religious exercises is to habituate himself to think that God is a woman. Thus the followers of the Śakti school justify their appellation by the belief that God is a woman and it ought to be the aim of all to become a woman.[43]

Similarly, speaking of the Sahajiyās, M.M. Bose writes:

> The Sahajiyās also believe that at a certain stage of spiritual culture the man should transform himself into a woman, and remember that he cannot have experience of true love so long as he cannot realise the nature of woman in him.[44]

In a Caryā song we find that the Yogin Kanha became effeminate.[45] The *Ācārabhada Tantra* prescribes that the Parā Śakti should be worshipped only by becoming a woman.[46]

Pañcatattvaṃ khapuṣpañca pūjayet kulayoṣitam|
Vāmācāro bhabettatra vāmā bhūtvā yajet parām||

It seems therefore that the Tantric mode of worship was originally followed by women. It appears from a legend that Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva were transformed into women before they were allowed to see that Devī in her highest form.[47] These legends of sex transformation may have some bearing on the widespread custom according to which it is compulsory for the priest to use female robes during his priestly function. Among the tribes of California, the male shamans used to dress themselves in female robes.[48] Effeminate sorcerers or priests of this sort were found among the Sea-Dyaks of Borneo, the Bugis of South Celebes, the Potagonians of South America, the Aleutians and many other Indian tribes of North America, the Congolese, the inhabitants of Madagascar and in many other countries of the world.

Referring to the Lāmāvarga or the practices of the Lāmās, P.C. Bagchi says that the Lāmās originally constituted a mystic

group of female Tantric adepts. The same may be true in the cases of the Lākinīs, Ḍākinīs and Śākinīs.[49] If the observations of Bagchi are correct, we may hold that in more ancient times these Lāmās, like other goddesses of the Tantric pantheon, were originally female Tantric adepts who later came to be deified. It was among them that the secret conclaves of Lamaism developed. The followers of the special doctrine of the Lāmās, says the *Jayadrathayāmala*, should practise self-control in the company of women; according to the special doctrine of the Śākinis, the adept should have his meals in company of the Yoginīs.[50] These customs confirm that the Tantric esoteric practices belonged to the females before they were taken up by the males. The *Guhyasamāja*,, the oldest extant Buddhist Tantra, while describing the different ceremonies in connection with initiation mentions *prajñābhiṣeka* or initiation of the disciple with Prajñā or Śakti.[51] The preceptor takes the hand of a Vidyā or Śakti, a beautiful woman, and placing it on the hand of the disciple says that, as Buddhahood is impossible of attainment by any other means, this Vidyā should be accepted and never abandoned in life. The Vidyās were therefore women of flesh and blood. Later on, they were deified. The *Sammoha-tantra* gives a list of the Vidyās whose worship was current in different parts of India. Some of them are well-known names of Buddhist and Brahmanical goddesses.[52] But if the original conception of Vidyā, as enumerated in the *Guhyasamāja*, be understood, it is possible to believe that originally at least, some of them were female human beings, later raised to the standard of divinity.

Notes

1. IV. 10.
2. VIII. 56 ff.
3. V. 2. 84.
4. II. 6.
5. For details see Desai, *ESI*, *passim*.
6. See my *AIR*, 1-69.
7. *Ibid.*, 1-24. Cf. *JOI*, XXI, 1-21.
8. *SAGS*, I, 158-59.
9. VI. 4.3.

10. *VBYS*, CX-CXI.
11. V. 1.4.4.
12. *GB* (1966), III. 92-105.
13. Bhattacharyya, *AIR*, 48-69.
14. Webster, *PSS*, 38 ff.
15. I. 3.
16. See my *IPR*.
17. Webster, *PSS*, 49-50.
18. Briffault, *M*, II. 447.
19. See my *IPR*, appendices.
20. *SAGS*, 205, 209.
21. *FL*, XXV, 183 ff.
22. *CI*, 260-61.
23. Rousselet, *INP*, 173.
24. Oman, *BTM*, 241 f.
25. *HFC*, 44 ff.
26. X. 25. 40-41.
27. I. 4.16.
28. Elliot Smith, *ED*, 48.
29. *HSG*, 71-77.
30. For details about the connection of Holi and Dewali with the death and resurrection theme see my *AIR*, 114-29.
31. Cf. *RV*, IV. 48.3.
32. *RPV*, 91.
33. *RFNI*, 100 ff.
34. *ERE*, V. 79-80.
35. *Ibid.*, 80.
36. Whitehead, *VGSI*, 49 ff.
37. IX. 1. 137-45.
38. *Tantrsāra* 642 ff; *Devi. Bh.*, III. 26-27.
39. *M*, XV.
40. Dasgupta, *ORC*, 116.
41. Manu, IX. 3; IX. 18.
42. *Vāmakeśvara*, LI; Vasu, *VK*, VII. 513.
43. *CW*, IV. 208.
44. *PCSCB*, 42.
45. Dasgupta, *ORC*, 105, 116-17.
46. *VK*, VII. 512.
47. *Devi. Bh.*, III. 4. 6-10.
48. Powers, *TC*, 152, 270.
49. *ST*, 45 ff.
50. *Ibid.*, 49.
51. *GS*, 161.
52. Bagchi, *ST*, 100-01.

Appendix IV: The Realm of Kāmākhyā

We have already had the occasion to refer to the Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā of the north-eastern region in various contexts. Her temple stands on the beautiful Nīlācala hill overhanging the Brahmaputra river in Guwahati. The goddess is represented in the form of a female organ of generation made of stone. In the *Kālikā Purāṇa*[1] it is said that at Kāmagiri in Kāmarūpa the *Yoni* or the organ of generation of Satī fell when her corpse was carried by Śiva, and the Devī is known there as Kāmākhyā. In the *Yoginītantra*[2] it is said that at the request of Brahmā, the goddess killed the demon Keśī in a place called Kesipur named after the demon. Here the goddess was propitiated by Brahmā whom she told that her *yonimaṇḍala* should be worshipped where Keśī was killed and the place would be celebrated as the *pīṭha* or holy resort of Kāmākhyā.[3]

The name Kāmākhyā is associated with *kāma* or desire which is said in the *RV*[4] to have been the first movement that arose in the One. It is mentioned as a cosmogonic force in the *AV*[5] in which the creative process is viewed as a procreative process. Kāmadhātu is one of the three cosmic spheres in the Buddhist conception. In sophisticated Tantric belief Kāma is the equilibrium of the *prakāśa* (static) and *vimarśa* (dynamic) Śakti of Śiva.[6] Kāmakalā is conceived of as the combination of the three *bindus* of Ravi, Agni and Soma and as Mahātripurasundarī.[7] In the human body Kāmakāla is said to reside in the form of a triangle within the *candramaṇḍala* or lunar orb of the pericarp of the inverted white lotus known as *sahasrarāpadma*.[8] *Kāmatattva* is the theoretical interpretation of sex

symbolism, the effect of sexual intercourse bringing a mental detachment conducive to obtaining pure knowledge.[9] *Kāmākhyāyoni* is the soft and bright Tantric triangle on the *mūlādhāra*.[10]

Some theories, suggestive of a probable Khasi origin of the Goddess, have been indicated above. The Khasi language belongs to the Mon-khmer group of the great Austric family of languages. According to B.K. Kakati, Kāmākhyā is probably derived from an Austric formation, such as *kamoi* (demon) in old Khmer, *kamoit* (devil) in Cham, *kamet* (corpse) in Khasi, *komui* (grave) or *komouch* (corpse) in Santali. It may be a substitution for the word like *komouch* meaning grave or the dead.[11] Others hold that the name of the goddess recalls more accurately the *ka-mei-kha* of the Khasis. According to R.M. Nath, in the Khasi language the prefix *ka* is always indicative of a feminine perception and as such *ka-mei* should mean the mother-power. *Kha* also means 'one who brings forth'. Hence *ka-mei-kha* is the primordial Female Principle.[12] According to Hamlet Bareh, the Hindu Kāmākhyā is an adaptation from the Khasi ancestral mother *Ka-mei-kha* and the present Guwahati region was also originally inhabited by the Khasis. The Female Principle of creation among the Khasis is Ka-Blei Synshar who acts as energy of the Supreme Being U Blei Nonghew, just as Śakti stands in relation to Śiva. He holds that Prāgjyotiṣa is also a derivative of the Khasi Pāgar-juhātich. Maibong is also a Khasi word. The Aryan-speaking races of the plains drove away the Austric speakers in the hill region, but Aryanised some of their cults which included that of the Mother Goddess Ka-mei-kha, the Ai Gosani or Yoni Devī.[13] P.C. Choudhury thinks that 'it is possible that the Yoni-goddess migrated to Assam with the migration of the Austrics or the matriarchal tribes like the Khasis and the Garos and that Naraka became responsible for the foundation of Devī worship in Kāmarūpa'.[14] Other theories are to be mentioned later.

Here our purpose is not to speculate upon the name or origin of the goddess. We are concerned with the fiefdom. There is a significant verse in the *Kāmākhyātantra* which reads as follow—*tripurā-kaukikā caiva jayantī maṇicandrikā/kāchārī māgadhi devī asyāmi ṡapta parvatāḥ*. This means that Tripurā, Kuki, Jaintia, Manipur,

Chandranātha, Kāchār and Maga (Arakan), these seven regions are under the control of the goddess Kāmākhyā. The *Devī Purāṇa*[15] states that the goddess was worshipped in her different forms in centres like Kāmarūpa, Kāmākhyā Bhoṭṭadeśa and other lands. The *Yoginītantra*[16] confirms the Austric formation of the names Kāmākhyā and Kāmarūpa indicating that the deity was formerly a goddess of spirits and ghosts worshipped in the cremation ground and says that Kāmākhyā is the *Kālī-śmaśāna* and stands for *navayoni*. The *Kālikā Purāṇa*[17] refers to Naraka as the king of the vast region up to the river Dikkaravāsinī recovered from the Kirātas, where the goddess, Kāmākhyā was the heroine (*Kāmākhyā yatra nāyikā*). Viṣṇu installed Naraka as the king of the land watered by the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) which is sanctified by the presence of Kāmākhyā.[18] Viṣṇu also advised his son Naraka not to worship any deity apart from Kāmākhyā.[19] But later Naraka ceased to be a devotee of Kāmākhyā under the influence of Bāṇa, the ruler of Śoṇitapura, who was favoured by Śiva. He did not even allow the sage Vasiṣṭha to visit the goddess. Vasiṣṭha thereupon cursed him that so long as Naraka was living the goddess would not stay at his kingdom.[20]

Hiuen Tsang (seventh century) travelled in the Brahmaputra valley but he did not mention Kāmākhyā. The Tezpur grant of Vanamāla (tenth century) states that the mount Kāmakūṭa was inhabited by Kāmeśvara and Mahāgaurī,[21] the latter being no other than Kāmākhyā.[22] The Gauhati grant of Indrapāla (twelfth century) which also refers to Pārvatī and Gaurī, and the king's knowledge in the Tantric lore, points to the same.[23] The Kāmakūṭa mentioned in the grant of Vanamāla have also been referred to by Kālidāsa.[24] The Kāmapīṭha of the Tantras is called Kubjikā Pīṭha and Kāmākhyā in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*[25] which gives details of her cult. The glory of Kāmākhyā has also been described in the *Devībhāgavata*[26] in which it is stated that 'the resort of Tripurabhairavī is in *Kāmākhyā-yonimaṇḍala* where the goddess Mahāmāya dwells for ever, the site being the jewel of all the holy places. No sacred place can excel this one in which the goddess is seen menstruating every month. There the gods stay as mountains; in fact mountains are resorts of all the important gods. It will not be an exaggeration if it be said that

though the wise persons have identified the entire world with the body of the goddess, the said *Kāmākhyāmaṇḍala* has no second in reflecting her real glory.'

According to the *Kāmākhyātantra* the goddess is worshipped in five forms—Kāmākhyā, Tripurā, Kāmeśvarī, Śaradā and Mahāmāyā. Like other local and tribal Mother Goddesses she was incorporated in the conceptually advanced Śākta-Tantric religious frame and declared as a regional manifestation of the all-pervading Female Principle. In the Buddhist *Hevajratantra*[27] and the *Ain-i-Akbari*,[28] Kāmarūpa is described as a celebrated *pīṭha* named after its presiding deity. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century when Kāmarūpa was occupied by the Koch king Viśvasiṃha the existing ancient cult of Kāmākhyā was renovated. The present temple was built in 1565 during the reign of his son Naranārāyaṇa alias Malladeva. The temple contains two stone figures which are said to be representations of Naranārāyaṇa and his brother Chilarai or Śukladhvaja. It also contains an inscription which gives details of the construction. Many legends which cluster round the goddess Kāmākhyā, though medieval in origin, bear touch of the primitive concept of the divine goddess and her mortal lover. In different parts of the ancient world the goddess was associated with a mortal lover with whom she mated year after year. Her lover was usually the priest especially selected for the union, and killed after the performance of the sexual union in which a woman of flesh and blood impersonated the goddess.[29] According to one legend, king Naraka loved the goddess who gave consent to his marriage proposal on condition that he would have to make a huge construction within a single night. Naraka almost accomplished it with his demoniac power but the goddess made the cock crow before its scheduled time and refused to marry him. The story of the beheading of the priest Kenkukalai for helping king Naranārāyaṇa to see the goddess dancing naked has been given elsewhere in the book. The king was cursed that he and his descendants would all perish if they once set foot on the mount Nīlācala.[30] In another version of the legend, the king was not Naranārāyaṇa. He was Dharmapāla, but not the king of the same name of the Pāla line.

According to tradition the Nīlācala mountain represents the body

of Śiva himself and when Satī's genital organ fell on it, the mountain turned blue. When Naraka founded a kingdom in Kāmarūpa, he declared himself as the custodian of this yoni-goddess. In later religious history of the north-eastern region, other goddesses came to be recognized, as her varied manifestations. She was no longer the regional Mother Goddess, but the embodiment of the all-pervading Śakti. She was identified with Śiva's amorous wife Pārvatī. This new motif came into play and fresh conceptions have been ascribed to the goddess. The wife-goddess Pārvatī, known as Kāmākhyā for her *kāma* or amorous desire according to the secondary interpretation of her name, was again assimilated to the virgin goddess of beauty and sex, Tripurā. A considerable section of the *Kālikā Purāṇa* is devoted to the exposition of the rites of her worship. The cult of virgin worship and of the sexual aspect of the Devī worship seems to be derived from the cult of Tripurā.[31] The equation of Kāmākhyā with Buddhist Tārā and the story of Vasiṣṭha's austerities in the Nīlācala have been discussed earlier. The Ugratārā or Ekajaṭā temple at Gauhati points to this association. The *Yoginītantra* says that 'Tārā is the same as Kālī the embodiment of supreme love; so also is the Kāmākhyā'. In this way 'all local and independent deities such as Umā, Kālī, Karālā, Cāmuṇḍā, etc., came to be regarded as manifestations of Kāmākhyā or Durgā in different circumstances'.[32]

A peak of the Nīlācala hill where the shrine of Kāmākhyā is situated is known as Brahmaparvata where is the holy resort of Bhuvaneśvarī, also known as Mahāgaurī.[33] Bhuvaneśī or Bhuvaneśvarī is regarded as one of the ten Mahāvidyās. In the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* section of the *Tantracuḍāmaṇi* and also in certain lists of the Mahavidyās found in the *Tantrasāra*, Kāmākhyāvāsinī is substituted for Bhuvaneśī. In the *Kālikā Purāṇa* Bhuvaneśvarī is described as one of the eight yoginīs worshipped in the form of a stone slab, others being Guptakāmā, Śrīkāmā, Vindhyavāsinī, Koṭiśvarī, Vanasthā, Pādadurgā and Dīrgheśvarī.[34] In the *Yaginītantra*[35] she is described as residing in the *sūryamaṇḍala.* Dīrgheśvarī of the list of the eight *yoginīs* has her shrine in the Rangmahal region of northern Gauhati. In the *Yoginītantra* the temple of Dīrgheśvarī is located about seven *dhanus* west of Kāmanātha.[36] The temple was established

in Śaka 1657 or AD 1705 during the reign of Śivasiṃha. The four-armed image of the goddess which is worshipped at present is a recent one, the original being lost. According to the local tradition, this was the original site of Kāmākhyā which has now gone underground giving space for the erection of the present temple which is why the site is known as Gupta-Kāmākhyā.[37]

The goddess Kāmākhyā has made her way also among the north-eastern hill tribes. Among the Garos who have various forms of Mother Goddesses such as Nuting or Muring or Nuring, the personification of the dynamic energy of the creator, also known as Dingipa Ba-bra, Minim, the consort of the sun, Muja, mother of the human race, Durokma, the goddess of monkeys, and so forth, the goddess Kāmākhyā is also admitted. According to the Garo folklore, a lady called Naini-me'Chik got an image of the fertility goddess Fajau. While she was moving with the image of the goddess in the company of an exodus party she became tired and put it on the way. But the image stuck to the ground for ever as a firm mountain and subsequently began to be worshipped as Kāmākhyā. This legend has similarity with one associated with Kecāikhāti of Sadia.[38] Kāmākhyā is also popular among the Hinduised Pnārs or Syntengs or Jaintias of Meghalaya who were Śāktas. The temple of the goddess Jayantī, a form of Durgā in Jayantīapura, their capital, became famous all over Bengal and a great part of India as one of the 51 *pīṭhas*. The Jaintia kings used to offer human sacrifices, generally condemned criminals, before the goddess.[39] Besides the Durgā temple at Nartiang on the Jaintia hills, in a village named Chela on the south of the Khasi hills, there is a Caṇḍikāsthāna or holy resort of the goddess Caṇḍikā. In the Baurabhag region of the Jaintia hill there is a *pīṭha* dedicated to the Devī. A stone-slab installed there is regarded by the devotees and pilgrims as the left leg of Satī dismembered from her body by the wheel of Viṣṇu.

S.K. Bhuyan says that *ka* is the feminine prefix and *mei-kha* is the old mother, and as such in Khasi concept Kāmākhyā should mean the holy resort at the Old Mother Buḍi Ai or Buḍi Gosānir Thān. To the Bodo-Kacharis Kāmākhyā is Kham Maikha suggestive of the Old Mother, locally worshipped side by side with Old Śiva known as Bathauborai.[40] She is worshipped in the beginning of the new year by offering rice to her altar, praying for children and their

long life. They also believe that during the *ambuvācī* the goddess menstruates and in this connection perform a ritual of corn. The goddess Kāmākhyā is equated with the primordial energy and worshipped as the eternal mother and protectress of all beings. According to Dhupram Basumatari the name Kāmākhyā is derived from *khamnāya-bimākhā*; Khāmnāya means 'to sustain', 'to nourish', 'to protect', bimā means 'mother' and 'khā' means 'self'. So Kāmākhyā should mean 'the mother who herself nourishes'.[41] The more primitive tribal goddess Mainao, also known as Bathou Buri and generally identified with Hindu Lakṣmī, is also equated with Kāmākhyā. The Bodo-Kachari king Tharung-pha is said to have become initiated into the doctrine of Śakti and introduced the worship of Bhagavatī, who was often equated with Kāmākhyā, with human and animal sacrifices. The Dimasa kings were worshippers of Śakti who erected Śākta temples in their capital Maibong. The family deity of the Dimasa kings was Raṇacaṇḍi, also known as Mahāmāyā and Heremḍi. She has two other names, Lāiridi and Gāmādi. The Sonowal Kacharis worship, besides their corn-mother Lakhimi of Lakṣmī, such Mother goddesses of the neighbouring peoples as Buḍa-Buḍi, Kecāikhāti or Tāmreśvarī, Mālinī and so forth.[42]

Among these goddesses Raṇacaṇḍī and Kecāikhāti are linked with Kāmākhyā, as we shall presently see. The Meches, who are also of Bodo stock, worship Kālī and Durgā. Their principal goddess, however, is Bathu-buḍi or Śrī (Ciri) Buḍi. Among other goddesses, they have Kāmākhyā and Kecāikhāti, besides Sarasvatī, Pakāikhāti, Nakhba-Buḍi, Āla-Buḍi, etc.[43] The chief goddess of the Rabhas is Bāyakho. According to the Rabha legends, her original resort was Śoṇitapura, the capital of Bāṇa whose daughter Uṣā was secretly married to Kṛṣṇa's son Aniruddha. After the discomfiture of Bāṇa in war against Kṛṣṇa, his son left Darmang, modern Darrang, and made his clansmen settled in different hill areas under the protection of Bāyakho. The places of their settlements were named after the family women who were later deified. Among these deified sisters Cāmpāya presided over the lions and Chuchari became associated with Tukreśvarī. But most important is Tāmāya who is described as a form of Kecāikhāti, the alter-ego of Kāmākhyā.[44]

Among the Karbis, Mother Goddess Haimu is connected with

vegetation and fertility. Another powerful goddess is Bachinja who represents the Śakti or energy of the creator. The Tiwas or Lalungs worship Bāuli or Pārvatī who is invoked in every occasion. Their other important goddesses are Jalakālikā, Thalakālikā, Bhagavatī, Seven Mothers and so forth. Among the Ahoms, the primordial energy was known by the name Kham-Kham-pha. The goddess of knowledge was Jaching-pha. The Ahom kings patronized the cults of the local tribes, and themselves became Hinduised. They were devotees of Kecāikhāti and also of ten-armed Durgā, the latter being their tutelary deity. Their Earth Mother was known as Aimenāng. Besides they worshipped Suvacanī or Śubhacaṇḍī who is also popular in Bengal and Orissa where women perform her *vrata* for prosperity and progeny with recital of her legends. According to the Ahom tradition the cult of Suvacanī was introduced during the reign of Swargadeva Chukapa and was regarded as the Ahom incarnation of the celebrated Kecāikhāti whose worship would take place before the commencement of the Durgā Pūjā. The advent of the Tungkhungia dynasty with Gadadhar as the first ruler, who was a patron of Śāktism' marked the ushering in of the Śākta influence.

The *thāns* are open places regarded as holy resorts of the Mother Goddess in north-eastern India. The *than* of Kāka Gosānī at Bokakhat is associated with the legend of wonder-working power of the goddess in regard to the accession of the Tungkhungia king Gadapani. This tribal Gosānī is now identified with Kālī or Durgā but her original primitive character is indicated by the Deodhani dancers serving as a feature of her cult. Likewise the *thān* of Āi Gosānī at Birukuchi is associated with the religious activities of the Koch Kings. One of the legends associated with the *thān* of Phulbari on the bank of the Pichilā at Nārāyanpur in northern Lakhimpur is that here was a temple where the Mother Goddess resembling Āi Kāmākhyā and known as Guhyakālī, was worshipped by the Ahom kings. It is said that the temple was invaded, plundered and destroyed, and the image was shifted by the priests to Kalavati at Gahapur in Tezpur where the goddess came to be known as Barakālikā. The *thān* of K'ali Āi at Jamira of the bank of Brahmaputra about seven miles west of Dibrugarh retains tribal character even today. Kalangpur or Kalyanipur in Darrang contains the *thān* of Kalyaṇi Gosānī. The

thān of Mahā bhairavī at Śoṇitpur is associated with the legendary king Bāṇa. At Parvat Joyar in Goalpara is the *thān* of Mahāmāyā where the goddess is worshipped in her ten-armed and three-eyed form. Another shrine of Mahāmāyā in Goalpara belong to the Raj family of Gaurīpur. At Krishnai in Goalpara is the shrine of Tukreśvarī which is regarded as a secondary *pīṭha*. The shrine of Buḍi Gosānī is situated at Jorhat. The goddess is regarded as a form of Jayanteśvarī, the Mother Goddess of the Jaintias. Like Kāmākhyā the goddess is basically worshipped in her *yoni* form though her image is that of Mahiṣamardinī.

The presiding goddess of Tripurā is Tripureśvarī. The oldest coin of Tripura, known to be that of Dhanyamāṇikya (*c.* AD 1506) contains the lion vehicle of Durgā on the reverse. Among the tribal goddesses of the Tipras, Mailu-ma, the goddess of rice, and Khulu-ma, the goddess of cotton-plant, are identified with Śrī or Lakṣmī while Tui-ma, the water-mother, with Gaṅgā. The seven Buḍirak sisters are identified with Sapta Mātṛka. Sarasvatī and Umā are also popular among the Tipras. In Manipur, among the Maitheis seven *lairemas* or goddesses were regarded as the ancestresses of the seven *shalais* or clans, namely, Ningthouja, Angom, Khumal, Moirang, Lu-wang, Sarang-Leisangthem and Khaba-a-Ngenba, which were again identified with seven Brahmanical *gotras* with the expansion of Hinduization. In the Phayeng inscription of Khongtekcha the king is described as a devotee of Śiva and Devī. According to Manipuri legends, Śiva and Umā came to Manipur to perform *rāsa* dance at the imitation of Kṛṣṇa and Gopis. Agricultural festivals connected with fertility cult are common among the Hrussos (Akas), Khowas (Buguns), Dhammais, Nishis, Bangnis, Sulungs, Apa Tanis, Hill Miris, Adis (Abors), Tangsas, etc., professing ancient tribal religions.[47]

There are three local legends regarding Mālinīthāna in the lower part of the West Siang district in Arunachal Pradesh. (1) Here Kṛṣṇa presented a garland (*mālā*) of flowers to Pārvatī and addressed her as Mālinī which accounts for the name of the place. (2) Here Śiva fell in love with a beautiful damsel called Mālinī, whose head was cut off owing to the wrath of the jealous Pārvatī, as is attested to by a headless image of a female. (3) It is same as the Ākāśigaṅgā *pīṭha* where parts of Satī's body fell. Mālinī is, however, the name of one

of the 64 traditional Yoginīs. The temple site is located just at the edge of the foothills on a hillock about 2 metres high. The temple was probably erected during the period of the Pāla rulers of Assam. At present only the basements of the temple remain, the walls and roofs having completely crumbled down. The ruins exhibit sculptural exuberance of Śaiva-Śākta affiliation. Mālinīthāna originally fell within the zone of the primitive Mother Goddess cult which later received Śākta-Tantric orientation. In North Lakhimpur, the cults of Baṭhavali Gosānī Pañcānan or Kālī Gosānī, Murābhagā, Kecāikhāti, Loṇapāṇi, Nila Gosānī and Sarhī Gosānī and in Tezpur those of Caṇḍi, Mahābhairavī Gosānī, etc., was in vogue since the pre-Ahom days. In the middle of these two regions there was the cult of Tripurābhairavī worshipped in Tantric Bhairavī Cakra. The headless image, supposed to be of Mālinī, recalls the Tantric Chinnamastā or the Buddhist Vajrayoginī. In the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, Mālinīthāna is described as belonging to the spiritual kingdom of Dikkaravāsinī.[48]

The fame of the goddess Kecāikhāti (eater of raw flesh) travelled far and wide, and pilgrims from various parts of India, used to assemble in her temple at Sadia in the month of Vaiśākha. She was the same goddess as Dikkaravāsinī of the Tantras and Purāṇas[49] and was also known by the name Tāmreśvarī who had two forms *tīkṣṇa* (fearful) and *lalita* (graceful). The former was black, pot-belied and with one lock of matted hair (*ekajaṭā*). She was also called Ugratārā. Her attendants were Bhagā, Subhāga, Cāmundā, Karālā, Bhisanā and Vikalā—all dreadful names.[50] She was worshipped in general like the goddess Kāmākhyā, but her most delectable offerings consisted of strong spirituous liquor, human sacrifice, *modaka*, flesh, curry, cocoanuts and sugarcane.[51] She is regarded as a form of Kāmākhyā and also of Tripureśvarī of Tripura. In the *Yoginītantra* it is said that there are four *pīṭhas* in Kāmarūpa, viz., Ratnapīṭha, Kāmapīṭha, Suvarṇapīṭha and Sumarapīṭha. The last one was in Sadia, presided over by Dikkaravāsinī who was also known as Kecāikhāti and Tāmreśvarī. There are other temples of Kecāikhāti in the North-East. At Kumigram, about seven miles north of Silchar, the chosen deity of the Kachari kings was known as Kāñcākhānti (Kecāikhāti). In Khachpur, the last capital of the Dimasa-Kacharis, the same goddess is known as Kāñcāikhāti. In north Lakhimpur there is a temple of Kecāikhāti.

According to the local legends Kecāikhāti Gosānī assumed the form of a stone image and lay in the Dibrang river. King Bhīṣmaka announced that he who could lift the image individually or collectively would be given the right to officiate as priests in the Tāmreśvarī and the Buḍa-Buḍi temples (the latter is situated near the mouth of Deopani on the left bank of the Dikrang river; about ten miles away from Sadia are its remains supposedly older than that of Tāmreśvarī, enshrining Śiva and Pārvatī, known as Buḍa-Buḍi). Many people attempted to do it, but on their failure four Chutiyas having purified mind and soul were able to lift the image and install it in the Tāmreśvarī temple. According to the Chutiya belief Piśvāchidema or Kecāikhāti or Tāmreśvarī was the daughter of Kunti (Śiva) and Moma (Śakti). Her name Dikkaravāsinī was due to her association with Dikar river. Her resort was known as Eastern Kāmākhyā. It is said that before the foundation of Chutiya kingdom in 1204 the Kacharis ruled in their territory and Kecāikhāti Gosānī originally belonged to the Kacharis. Though Kecāikhāti is generally identified with the Raṇacaṇḍī of the Kacharis, the Chutiyas do not subscribe to this view.[52]

The Chutiya legends in regard to the origin of the Tāmreśvarī temple have a close bearing on those connected with Kāmākhyā. The goddess revealed herself before a king of Vidharva and suggested that if he were able to erect a temple with copper roof in one night, she would be his devotee, and in the case of the king's failure to do it, their role would be reversed. The construction was nearly complete when the goddess created a magical cock by whose crowing the king had to leave the work unfinished and become her devotee. Since the goddess was worshipped according to the rituals prescribed in the *Tāmrākṣarī Śāstra*, she came to be known as Tāmreśvarī.[53] Human sacrifice in the Tāmreśvarī temple was not an exceptional phenomenon of which mention is made in the second chapter under the sub-heading 'Blood-thirsty goddesses'. It was also done in the Ugratārā temple of Gauhati, in the Faljur Math in Jaintia, in the Kālī temple of the Mikir Hills, in the Kāñcakhānti temple of Kachar, on the bank of Kapili in Meghalaya, and so forth.

As early as in 1804, F. Buchanen reported the existence of three Śākta *pīṭhas* in Nowgong and Dikkaravāsinī in Sadia whom he identified with the Eastern Kāmākhyā. In 1837, W.B. Brown gave a

vivid description of the Tāmreśvarī temple and his description was in substantial agreement with·what had been later described by E.T. Dalton in whose time it was already in the ruins. In 1848 Colonel Hannay suggested that the temple was rebuilt about the middle of the fifteenth century.[54] This is attested to by an inscription of the Chutiya prince Muktadharmanārāyaṇa dated Saka 1364, i.e. AD 1442, which refers to the construction of a boundary wall around the temple. According to B.K. Kakati the goddess represented the presiding deity of the Hayatāmra-Pīṭha of the North Eastern region and hence came to be known as Tāmreśvarī and the copper temple was constructed in conformity with her appellation.[55] But the temple had nothing to do with copper, even the clamps holding the stones together were all of iron. Block suggested that the temple was named after Tāmra mentioned as a son of the mythical king Naraka. He saw only one wall and a few images of Kālī, Sūrya and Sarasvatī.[56] According to Rajmohan Nath originally it was *caturayā-tana* temple comprising four shrines. Sculptures of Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Kālī, etc., found from the site suggest some similarity with the Mālinīthāna temple regarding cult and worship.[57]

The primitive background of the goddess Kāmākhyā and her eastern incarnation variously called Dikkaravāsinī or Tāmreśvarī or Kecāikhāti, whose replicas are also found in other places, their successive developments and subsequent Hinduization and eventual elevation to the rank of the Supreme Being, the epithet *kirātinī* attributed to the Śākta Devī indicating her prehistoric association with the Kirāta tribes of the North-East who is worshipped as a goddess fond of wine, meat and beasts (*sidhumāṃsapaśupriyā*), their association with social systems showing glimpses of something like *matria potestus* and various allied features undoubtedly offer a very interesting historical study. The glorification of Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā as found in the *Kālīka, Bṛhaddharma* and *Devībhāgavata* Purāṇas as well as in the *Kubjikā, Yoginī* and *Cuḍāmaṇī* Tantras, etc., is suggestive of the fact that the region bounded by the Himalayan extension on the north, the river Dikrang on the east, the confluence of Lakhya and Brahmaputra on the south and the Karatoyā on the west was from the earliest period a zone of the Tantric cult of the 'Female Principle'. Among the three traditional Tantric zones,

the *Mahāsiddhisāratantra* locates the western boundary of Aśvakrāntā on the Karatoyā in the Dinajpur district and the eastern boundary to Yavadvipa or Java.[58] The extensive distribution of the cult of the Mother Goddess which crystallized in the form of Śaktism in North-Eastern India is also attested to by the architectural and sculptural evidence. The worship of Tārā or Ugratārā which seems to be 'Brahmanic Sākta adaptation of Mahayana Buddhist cult of Tārā'[59] was established in Kāmarūpa in Ugratārā temple during the time of the Pāla rulers. In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*[60] Kāmarūpa is mentioned as a *pīṭha* where the worship of Tārā led to spiritual attainment or *siddhi*. The *Kālikā Purāṇa*[61] describes the rules for the worship of Ugratārā and *Yoginītantra*[62] equates the goddess with Kāmākhyā. The Ugratārā *pīṭha* referred to above is situated in the Latasil area of Guwahati. Here a temple was built in 1607 by the Ahom king Śivasiṃha.

Notes

1. LXXII 2.
2. Paṭala XV.
3. Bardoloi *D*, 178.
4. *RV* X. 129.4.
5. *AV* IX. 2.
6. Setubandha com. on *Nityaṣodaśikārṇava* VI. 10-11.
7. *Cidvalli* com. on *Kāmakalāvilāsa* VII.
8. Kālīcaraṇa on *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* XI.
9. *Tantrāloka* III. 150.
10. Viśvanātha on *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* VIII.
11. Kakati, *MGK*, 6-7, 35-6.
12. Bardoloi, D, 180.
13. Barah *HCKP*.
14. Choudhury *HCPA* 419.
15. XXXIX. 14; LXII. 9.
16. *I.* ll.
17. XXXVIII. 95.
18. *Kālika* XXXVIII, ll-16.
19. Ibid., XXXVIII. 144.
20. Ibid., XXXIX. 1-21.
21. P.N. Bhattacharyya, *KSV*, 54-70.
22. Sircar *SP*, 15, 104.
23. *KSV* 116-29.

24. *Raghu* IV. 81-4.
25. LXII. 76; LXXVI. 75, etc.
26. *Devībhāgavata* VII. 38. 15-18.
27. Bagchi, *ST* 38; Snellgrove, *HT*, I. 70.
28. Jerret, *AA*, II, 312-14.
29. Kosambi, *MR* 4 2 ff, N.N. Bhattacharyya, *AIR*, 18-22.
30. Gunabhiram Barua, *Assam Burañji*, Calcutta 1876, 45.
31. Kakati, *MGK* 35-70.
32. B.K. Barua, *CHA*, I. 149
33. *Kālika* LXII. 125-6.
34. Ibid., LXII. 95-6.
35. Paṭala XI.
36. VII. 117.
37. Dīrgheśvarī is the goddess of tigers. At Adabari, about ten miles south of Nalabari to the north of Hajo, there is a *thān* or holy resort of Vyaghreśvarī. Other holy resorts of the tiger goddesses are found behind the Siddheśvara temple of Sualkuchi and Bangaigaon. See Biren Dutta in *Assam Sāhitya Sabhā Patrikā* 1981, No. 2.
38. R. Dewan Singh, *Folklore of the Garos*, Calcutta 1960, 369; Bardoloi, *D*, 293.
39. Gait, *HA*, 286; S.K. Chatterji, *Kirātajanakṛti* 86.
40. Baroloi, *D*, 181.
41. Basumatari, *BKSKA*, 16 ff. Bhavan Narzi, *Boḍo-Kāchārir Samāj āru Saṇskṛti*, Gauhati 1971, 245 ff.
42. N.N. Bhattacharyya, *RCNEI*, 96-7.
43. Bardoloi, *D*, 274, 279.
44. Ibid., 279 ff.
45. Gait, *HA*, 288.
46. Baroloi, *D*, 231 ff.
47. Bhattacharyya, *RCNEI* 100-1.
48. Ibid., 102.
49. *Yoginī* II. l; *Kālikā* LXXX. 39.
50. P.C. Bagchi in *IHQ*, VI, 485-6, VII. 1-16.
51. B.K. Barua, *CHA* 149.
52. Bardoloi, *D*, 216 ff.
53. Bina Misra in *Himālaya* 1982, No. 12, 43-9.
54. 'Notes on the Ancient Temples and Other Remains in the Vicinity of Suddyah, Upper Assam' in *JASB*, 1848, I, 439 ff.
55. Kakati, *MGK*, 65.
56. *ASIAR*, 1905-6, 26 ff.
57. *The Background of Assamese Culture*, Shillong 1948, Pl. XXV.
58. N.N. Bhattacharyya, *HTR* 411, 464, 482.
59. Chanda, *IAR*, 138, 142.
60. Verse 900.
61. LXXXI. 16-17
62. I. 12.

Appendix V: A List of Important Puranic Goddesses

Abhayā: Presiding goddess of Uṣṇatīrtha or Puṣpatīrtha, possibly connected with Puṣpagiri in the Malaya range. Eight-armed and with lion as her vehicle she offers protection. *Matsya* XIII. 41; *Devī Bh.* VII 30.70; *Padma* I. 17. 199; *Skanda* V. 3. 98.79.

Aditi: Devoid of Vedic glamour, she is daughter of Dakṣa, wife of Kaśyapa and mother of the gods, of twelve Ādityas, eleven Rudras and eight Vasus; performed austerities to bear the dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu in her womb; foiled the plan of the Asuras to mislead her. *Vāmana* XXVII-XXVIII; *Bṛhaddharma*, II. 16; *Bṛhannārāyaṇa* X-XI; *Rām* III. 14.4; *Mbh* I. 59.4, etc.

Aindrī: See Indrāṇī, Mātṛkās.

Ajitā: Goddess named after her attribute of invincibility, *Devī* XXXVII. 14.

Alakṣmī: Antithesis of Lakṣmī, to be warded off by various means. *Liṅga* II. 6-7.

Ambā: Presiding goddess of red colour in the Gandhamādana hill, a Himalayan peak at Badarikāśrama; installed at Mandākṣa mountain as Ambikā by Paraśurāma. *Devī* XXXVIII. 7; XLIV. 8.

Ambikā: Identified with Aparṇā, Pārvatī, Durgā, Mṛḍāṇī and Caṇḍikā in *Amarakośa*; presiding deity of Jvālāmukhī and Virāṭa country.

The former is in Kangra district while the latter in the Jaipur-Alwar-Bharatpur region of Rajasthan.

Amoghākṣi: Presiding goddess at Vipāśā, modern Beas a tributary of Indus, *Matsya* XIII. 35; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.64; *Padma* I. 17.193; *Skanda* V. 3.98.73.

Amṛtā: Presiding goddess of the Vindhya cave and Beṇā, a tributary of the Krishna, the Pengaṅgā or Waingaṅgā, *Matsya* XIII. 41, 49; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.70, 78; *Padma* I, 17.200, 208; *Skanda* V. 3.98.79.87; also known as Nitambā and Mṛgī.

Aṅganā: Also known as Anaṅgā and Taraṅgā; presiding deity at Bharatāśrama. *Matsya* XIII. 45; *Devī Bh.* 7.30.74; *Padma* I. 17. 203; *Skanda* V. 3.98.83.

Annapūrṇa: Presiding goddess of Vārāṇasī and Kāñcīpura, *Devī Bh.* 7.38.8; her conception as food-giving mother popularized by the *Tantrasāra*; also known as Annadā.

Aparājitā: A form of Durgā, a manifestation of Caṇḍika, Kauśikī, etc., often a subordinate of the supreme demon-slaying goddess, identified with Ajitā, Jayantī and Vijayā. *Devī* XXXVII. 13.

Aparṇā: Identified with Pārvatī, Durgā, Mṛḍāṇī, Caṇḍika and Ambikā in the *Amarakośa*; worshipped on the bank of the Karatoyā near Bhavānīpura in the Bogra district of North Bengal.

Arogā: Also known as Arogyā she is the presiding deity at Vaidyanātha, mod. Deoghar-Baidyanathdham in Giridhi district, Bihar. *Matsya* XIII. 41; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.70; *Padma* I. 17.188. *Skanda* V. 3. 98.79.

Arundhatī: Deified human being, originally wife of Vasiṣṭha; goddess residing among chaste women. *Matsya* XIII. 52; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.81; *Padma* I. 17. 210; *Skanda* V. 3.98.90.

Āryā: Identified with Nārāyaṇi or Tribhuvaneśvarī, the supreme goddess, and invoked by various names. *Harivaṃśa,* Viṣṇu, II, CXX.

Aṣṭanāyikā: Eight heroines of Pārvatī-Umā known as Jayā, Vijayā, Mātaṅgi, Lalitā, Nārāyaṇī, Sāvitrī, Svadhā, and Svāhā, *Kālikā* LXI. 47.

Aṣṭayoginī: Eight Yoginīs of Bhadrakālī are Jayantī, Maṅgalā, Kālī, Bhadrakālī, Kapālinī, Durgā, Śiva, Kṣamā and Dhātṛ; of Ugrecaṇḍā, Kauśikī, Śivadūtī, Haimavatī, Īśvarī, Śākambhari, Durgā, Mahodarī and Ugrācaṇḍā; and of Ugrātārā, Mahākālī, Rudrāṇī, Ugrā, Bhīmā, Ghorā, Bhrāmarī, Mahārātri and Bhairavī. *Kālikā* LXI. 39-41, 68.

Auṣadhi: Presiding goddess of the Uttarakuru region. *Matsya* XIII. 49; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.78; *Padma* I. 17.207; *Skanda* V. 3.98.87.

Avantī: Presiding deity of Bhairavaparvata in western Malwa.

Bhadrā: Presiding deity of Bhadreśvara in the Hooghly district, West Bengal. *Matsya* XIII. 31; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.61; *Padma* I.17.190; *Skanda* V. 3.98.70; worshipped at Bhadrakarṇikā, *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.27.

Bhadrakālī: Destroyer of Dakṣa's sacrifice. *Mbh* XIV. 283.54; *Devī Bh.* II. 27.9; presiding goddess of Jālandhara and Vaideha country, *Devī* XXXVIII; 7-8; same as Yoganidrā, destroyer of Mahiṣa, *Kālikā*, LX. 58; and Kātyāyanī, *Kālikā* LX. 78; cult mentioned by Manu III. 89; one of the eight Nāyikās, *Kālikā* LXI. 39.

Bhadrakarṇikā: Presiding goddess of Gokarṇa, modern Gendia about 30 miles from Goa. *Matsya* XIII. 30; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30. 59; *Padma* I. 17-188; *Skanda* V. 3.98.68.

Bḥadrasundarī: Presiding goddess of Trikuṭa, the mythical peak on which the city of Laṅkā was supposed to have situated. There was another Trikuṭa in northern Konkan. *Matsya* XIII. 35; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.64; *Padma* I. 17.193; *Skanda*. V. 3.98.73.

Bhagavatī: General term for the goddess born of the energy of various gods, applied to Caṇḍikā, Ambikā, Kauśikī, Durgā and others, the slayer of Mahiṣa, Śumbha-Niśumbha and so forth. *Devī Bh.* V. 1-31.

Bhairavī: Goddess living in the Kiskindhyā hills. *Devī* XXXVIII. 6; XLIV. ll, and also of Bhairavākṣa, *Devī Bh.* 38.24. General name of a class of goddess, often belonging to the Yoginī stock. Eight important Bhairavīs are Rudrārcikā, Rudracaṇḍī, Naṭeśvarī, Mahālakṣmi, Siddha-Cāmuṇḍikā, Siddha-Yogeśvarī, Bhairavī and Rūpavidyā. Among other Bhairavīs we have Tripurābhairavī, Sampatprādābhairavī, Caitanybhairavī, Rudrabhairavī, etc.

Bhavānī: Presiding deity of Sthānvīśvara, modern Thanesar in Haryana. *Matsya* XIII. 30; *Devī Bh* VII. 30.59; *Padma* I. 17. 188; *Skanda* V. 3.98.68; Vastrapatha, *Devī Bh.* III. 38.26.

Bhīmādevī: An incarnation of Durgā, *Mārkaṇḍeya* XCI. 47. The resort of this goddess situated on the Karamar in the Peshawar district has been described by Hiuen Tsang, Watters I. 221. She was specially worshipped as the goddess of the Himalayan region. *Matsya* XIII. 47; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30. 76; *Padma* I. 17.205; *Skanda* V. 3-98. 85. cf. Bhīmeśvarī, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.26.

Bhrāmarī: Slayer of the demon Aruṇa, *Mārkaṇḍeya* XCI. 49; *Devī Bh.* 10.13. Same as Bhramaravāsinī mentioned in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* III. 394 ff.

Bhuvaneśvarī: One of the Tantric goddesses of the Mahavidyā category. In the Purāṇas Bhuvaneśvarī is the general name of the supreme goddess ruling over the earth. Her description in *Devī Bh.* VII. 29: specially in Manidvipa, ibid., VII. 38.14.

Brahmāṇī, Brāhmī: See Mātṛkās. For origin see Varāha XC. 26-7.

Cāmuṇḍā: Name given to Kālī by Caṇḍika for her slaying demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. *Devīmāhātmya*, 7-25; destroyer of the demon

Ruru, so-called because she held the skin (*carma*) and head (*muṇḍa*) of her victim. *Devī* XXXVII. 17; also known as Caṇḍamārī, *Vāmana* LV; worship of *Kālīka* LXI. 26; human sacrifices to *Mālatimādhava*, Act V.

Caṇḍikā: Heroine of the *Devīmāhātmya* identified with Aparṇā, Pārvatī, Durgā, Mṛḍāṇī and Ambikā in the *Amarakośa*. Also known as Kauśikī. Appeared from the energy of the gods, stored in the hermitage of Kātyāyana (hence her name Kātyāyanī), or from the body of Pārvatī, human sacrifices to, *Kādambarī*, pūrva, 216; *Caṇḍī-śataka* of Bāṇa; hands of and types like Rudracaṇḍā, Pracaṇḍā, Caṇḍogrā, Caṇḍanāyikā, Caṇḍa, Caṇḍavati, Caṇḍarūpa, Aticaṇḍīka and Ugrācaṇḍā in *Agni* L. 1-42; *Devī Bh.* VII, 30.71; *Padma* I. 17. 200; *Skanda* V. 3.98.80 worshipped at Makarandaka on Amara-kaṇṭaka, *Matsya* XIII.42, *Devī Bh.* VII. 30. 71, *Padma* I. 17 200, *Skanda* V.3. 98.80, which is probably same as Amareśa, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.19.

Chāyā: Wife of Sūrya. *Śiva* VII. 59.

Dakṣāyānī: Same as Satī. Her nuptial life with Śiva and legends, *Kālīka* VIII-XVII.

Dakṣiṇā: Legends of *Devī Bh.:* IX. 45; *Brahmāvaivarta* II. 42.

Devakī: Deification of Kṛṣṇa's mother as a form of the goddess worshipped at Mathura. *Matsya* XIII. 38; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.67; *Padma* I. 17. 196; *Skanda* V. 3.98.76.

Devamātā: Presiding deity of the river Sarasvatī, river in Punjab running by Pehoa. *Matsya* XIII. 43; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.72; *Padma* I. 17. 201; *Skanda* V. 3.98.81.

Dhṛti: Presiding goddess of Piṇḍāraka, 16 miles to the east of Dvārakā in Kathiawar. *Matsya* XIII. 48; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.77; *Padma* I. 17. 206; *Skanda* V. 3.96.86.

Dhvani: Presiding goddess of Śaṅkhoddhāra, the island of Bati

(Bayt) at the south-western extremity of the Gulf of Cutch. References as those of Dhṛti; worshipped in Śaṅkukarṇa, *Devī Bh.* VII, 38.30.

Durgā: Goddess, who rescued the gods from the fear of great enemies, whose abode is situated between the Vindhya and Malaya ranges. *Devī* XXXVII. 8; XXXVIII, 3; invoked by Yudhiṣṭhira in *Mbh.* IV. 6 and by Arjuna in *Mbh.* VI. 23; worship of eighteen-armed in *Garuḍa* CXXXIV. 78; worship described in *Bṛhaddharma*, pūrva, XXI-XXII; worship of *Kālīka* LX; slaying of Mahiṣa, Śumbha Niśumbha and other demons, *Devīmāhātmya*, details *Devī Bh.* V. 1-35; her discourse to Himalaya *Kūrma* I. 12, presiding over Puṣkara, *Padma*, sṛṣṭi, 17; slaying of Durgama. *Devī Bh.* VII. 28, legend and worshipped of Ibid., IX. 50; *Brahmāvaivarta* II, 57-66; worship by Rāma, *Bṛhaddarmą* Pūrva XXII.

Ekānaṃśā: A form of Durgā, identified with Kauśikī and Vindyavāsinī and later with Subhadrā and Yoganidrā. *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III, 120; *Matsya* CLIV-CLVII.

Ekavīrā: Presiding goddess of the Sahyādri or the Western Ghats. *Matsya* XIII. 39; *Devī Bh.* 7. 30.68; *Padma* I. 197; *Skanda* V. 3.98.77.

Gaṅgā: Deified river, legends of *Devī Bh.* IX. 11-1 4; *Brahmavaivarta* II. 10-12; origin of *Liṅga* I. 52; greatness of *Agni* CX: *Bṛhaddharma* II. 12 ff; *Bṛhannāradīya* VI.

Gāyatrī: Name of Mahāmāyā or supreme goddess at Puṣkara. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38. 19; name of the goddess in the Vedic word, *Matsya* XIII. 50.

Gaurī: Same as Pārvatī and Umā born of the Himalaya; has a legend in various Purāṇas regarding the changing of her complexion by performing austerities. cf. *Devī* XXXVII. 7; installed at Candra mountain by Paraśurāma, Ibid., XLIV. 9; marriage of *Vāmana* LI-LIII; taught by Śiva about the greatness of the Brāhmaṇas and Kāśī, holding Candramaṇḍala and taking poison, *Śiva* I. 50, IV. 28, 55;

assumed the form of Durgā to kill Mahiṣa, *Skanda*, Aruṇa I. 10; mentioned in Hāla's *Gāthāsaptaśatī* I. l; V. 48; VII. 100; identified with Kauśikī, Vindyavāsinī, Kātyāyanī, Caṇḍikā and Ambikā. Her resort was at Kānyakubja. *Matsya* XIII. 28; *Devī Bh.*VII. 30.57.

Gomatī: Presiding goddess of Gomanta or the Goa region. *Matsya* XIII. 27; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.56; *Padma*, I. 17. 185; *Skanda* V. 3. 98.65.

Guhyakālī: Protectress goddess of Nepal, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.11.

Indrāṇī: Also known as Aindrī she is one of the seven or eight Mātṛkās. When conceived of as the supreme goddess, her abode is in the world of gods. *Matsya* XIII, 51; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.80; *Padma* I. 17. 209; *Skanda* V. 3.98.89.

Jamvaladeśvarī: Goddess having her holy resort at Srinagara in Kashmir. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.10.

Jayā: Name by which the supreme goddess was invoked by Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna, *Mbh.* IV. 6; VI. 23; cf. *Harivaṃśa,* Viṣṇu III. Presiding goddess of the Varāha mountain which may be identified with Baramula in Kashmir or Barahcchatra in Nepal. *Matsya* XIII. 31.

Jayantī: Goddess bestowing victory, *Devī* XXXVII.13; worshipped specially at Hastināpura, *Matsya* XIII. 28; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.57; *Padma* I. 17.186; *Skanda* V. 3.98 66; one of the *navapatrikās* required in Durgā worship; one of the eight Yoginīs, *Kālīka* LXI. 39.

Jyeṣṭhā: Same as Alakṣmi, the goddess of misfortune, sister of Lakṣmī. *Mbh.* VI. 23; Harivaṃśa Viṣṇu III.

Kālarātri: Presiding goddess of the Sahya mountain. *Harivaṃśa,* Viṣṇu III; *Devī* XXXVIII.7.

Kālī: Born of Durgā or Caṇḍikā or Pārvatī's eyebrow. *Devīmāhātmya*

VII. 5; *Vāmana* LV; born of anger provoked by Dakṣa, personification of the all consuming time, identified with Kapālī or Kapālinī, lives in the Kiskindhyā and adjoining mountains, *Devī* XXXVII. 15-16, XXXVIII, 6; brought from Yaśodā and established in Ayodhyā by Paraśurāma, Ibid., XLIV. 6; origin in *Kumārasaṃbhava* VII. 39; identified with Vindyavāsinī, *Gauḍavaho* 297; with Śabarī, Ibid., 305; worshipped specially at Kālānjara, *Matsya* XIII. 32; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.61; *Padma* I.17.190; *Skanda* V. 3.98.70; identification with Pārvatī and marriage with Śiva, and her Gaurī form, *Kālikā* XLIV-XLV; Tripurā, Bhīṣaṇā, Caṇḍī, Kartṛ, Hantrī, Vidhāyinī, Karālā, Śūlinī are her eight Yoginīs, *Kālīka* LXI. 92; origin of *Liṅga* I. 106, *Śiva* V. 17; austerities of *Śiva* VII. 10.

Kalyāṇī: Presiding deity of Mānasācala or Malayācala. *Matsya* XIII. 36, *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.65; *Padma* I. 17.194. *Skanda* V. 3.98.74.

Kāmacāriṇī: Presiding goddess of Mandara, the Mandar hill in Bhagalpur district, Bihar. *Matsya* XIII. 27; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30. 56; *Padma* I. 17. 185; *Skanda* V. 3. 98. 65.

Kāmākhyā: Celebrated goddess of Kāmarūpa, account of, *Kālikā* LXII; also known as Kāmeśvarī; Tripurabhairavī equated with Kāmākhyā-Yonimaṇḍala, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38. 15-18.

Kāmākṣī: Celebrated goddess of Kāñci enlogised by Mukakavi; worshipped at Gandhamādana. *Matsya* XIII. 26; mentioned as Kāmukī in *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.55 and as Kāmukā in *Padma* I. 17. 184 and *Skanda* V. 3-98. 64.

Kamalā: See Lakṣmī; presiding deity of Kamalālaya, *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.28, *Matsya* XIII. 31.

Kāmikā: Goddess installed by Paraśurāma at the Malaya mountain, *Devī Bh.* XLIV. 8.

Karāli: A terrible form of Mother Goddess, an aspect of Kālī, *Mbh.* VI. 23. 6.

Kātyāyanī: Origin of and hymns dedicated to *Varāha* XXVII-XXVIII; energy of the gods crystallized in sage Kātyāyana's place as the goddess destined to slay Mahiṣa, *Vāmana* XVIII-XX; appearance of *Kālīka* LX; goddess holding Śiva and Brahmā, *Devī* XXXVII-10; of the Kātya tribe, *Mbh.* VI. 23.6, cf. *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III. 1-3; identified with Vetāla in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* 117; worshipped by the Vraja maidens in autumn, *Bhāgavata* X. 22; identified with Aparṇā, Pārvatī, Durgā, Mṛḍāṇī, Caṇḍika, Ambikā and Kauśikī.

Kauśikī: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI. 23.8; identified with Yoganidrā, goddess of Kuśika tribe and slayer of Śumbha-Niśumbha in *Harivaṃśa.* Viṣṇu, II. 3-5, III. 1-3; emerged from Pārvatī's muscles, *Devīmāhātmya* V. 37-40; Umā or Pārvatī being taunted by Śiva left her black muscles from which sprang Kauśikī who was same as Niśā, Ekānaṃśā and Vindhyavāsinī, *Matsya* CLIV-CLVII; emerged from Kālī, *Kālīka* LXI. 69-82; identified with Durgā, Caṇḍikā and Ambikā and described as slayer of Śumbha-Niśumbha, Caṇḍa-Muṇḍa, etc. *Vāmana* LV-LVI; identified with Vindyavāsinī, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38. 8-9 and most Purāṇas cf. Śiva V. 21; eight Yoginīs or Mātṛkās who have emerged from her are Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārāsiṃhī, Aindrī and Śivadūtī, *Kālikā* LXI. 84.

Kirātī: Goddess named after her tribal devotees, the Kirātas of the Himalayan region, especially the tribes of north-eastern India. *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III; cf. *Kirātārjunīya* of *Mbh.*

Kīrtimatī: Presiding goddess of Ekāmraka or Bhuvaneswar in Orissa, *Matsya* XIII. 28; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.57; *Padma* I. 17. 186. *Skanda* V. 3.98. 66.

Kokāmukhā: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI. 23. 8; cf. *Varāha* CXL.

Koṭavī: Presiding goddess of Koṭitīrtha , *Matsya* XIII. 36; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.65; *Padma* I. 17. 194; *Skanda* V. 3.98.74.

Kumārī: Virgin goddess mentioned in the Taitt. Ār X.1.7. as Kanya-kumari and in the *Periplus* (Schoff 46) as Komari. Also mentioned in the Sangam classics.

Kumudā: Presiding goddess of Mānasa, the source of Śatadru or Sutlej in the Himalayas. *Matsya* XIII. 26; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.55.

Lakṣmī: Origin, names and attributes, *Viṣṇu* I. 8.1-32; invoked in Śrīsukta by Indra and other gods after her rise from the sea, and hymns addressed to her. *Viṣṇu* I. 9.116-47; shrines at Kolapura, Mātṛpura, Tulajāpura and Saptaśṛṅga, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38. 5-6; legends of, *Devī Bh.* IX. 39-42; establishment of, *Agni* LXII; worship of, Ibid., CCCI; cf. *Brahmavaivarta* II. 39.

Lalitā: Thousand names in *Brahmāṇḍa* and Bhāskara's *Saubhāgya-bhāskara* com. on it. Worshipped specially at Prāyaga, *Matsya* XIII. 26; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.55.

Liṅgadhāriṇī: Presiding goddess of Naimiṣa, modern Nimkhar or Nimsar and Misrikh regions of the Sitapur district, U.P. *Matsya* XIII.26; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.55; VII. 38.20.

Lolā: Presiding goddess of Utpalāvartaka which stands either for Utpalavatī, a river, modern Vyapar, in the Tinnevelly district or for Utpalavaṭa or Utpalāraṇya, modern Bithoor, near Kanpur. *Matsya* XIII. 45; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30. 74.

Mādhavī: earth goddess, *Viṣṇu* I. 4.20; worshipped in Śriśaila. *Matsya* XIII. 31.

Madirā: Goddess of wine. *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III, Kauṭilya IV.22.

Mahābhāgā: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI. 23.6; presiding goddess of Mahālaya, i.e. Oṃkāreśvara or Amareśvara, the island of Mandhata on the Narmada, 32 miles north-west of Khandwa, in the Nimar district, M.P. *Matsya* XIII. 44; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.73; VII. 38.27.

Mahābhīmā: Destroyer of Dakṣa's sacrifice, *Mbh.* XIV. 283.32.

Mahādevī: General name of the goddess. A goddess of this name was worshipped at Śālagrāma, the source of the river Gandak. *Matsya* XIII. 62.

Mahākālī: Invoked as one of the names of the great Goddess in *Mbh.* IV. 6.12; VI. 23.4; destroyer of Dakṣa's sacrifice, *Mbh.* XIV. 283.32; presiding deity of Jambumārga, *Devī* XXXVIII.8.

Mahālakṣmī: Legends of, *Devī Bh.* IX. 39-42; presiding goddess of Kolākhyā mountain, *Devī* XXXVIII. 7; of Karavīra, *Matsya* XIII. 40; *Padma* I. 17.198; *Skanda* V. 3.98.18.

Mahāntakā: Holy resort at Mount Mahendra. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.25.

Maheśvarī: Described as the destroyer of Daska's sacrifice in *Mbh.* XIV. 283. 32; presiding goddess of Mahākāla. cf. Mahākāla temple at Ujjayinī. *Matsya* XIII. 41; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.70. See Mātṛkā.

Manasā: Serpent Mother. Legends of *Devī Bh.* IX. 48; *Brahmā-vaivarta* II. 45.

Māṇḍavī: Presiding goddess of Māṇḍavyapura, modern Mandor in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. *Matsya* XIII. 42; *Devī Bh.* VII 30.71; *Padma* I. 17.200.

Maṅgalā: One of the many names of the goddess revealing her benevolent character, *Devī* XXXVII. 1; abode in between the Vindhya and Malaya ranges, Ibid., XXXVIII. 2-3; three Śaktis of, *Skanda*, prabhāsa 30; worshipped on the Ganges, *Matsya* XIII. 34; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.63; *Padma* I. 17.192. at Gaya, *Devī Bh.* VII 38.24; one of the eight Yoginīs, *Kālikā* LXI. 39.

Maṅgalacaṇḍī: Legends of, *Devī Bh.* IX, 47; *Brahmavaivarta* II.44.

Manmathā: Abode in Hemakūṭa, i.e. a part of northern Himalaya. *Matsya* XIII. 50; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.79.

Mārgadāyinī: Presiding goddess of Kedāra. *Matsya* XIII. *Devī. Bh.* VII. 38.23; *Padma* I.17.187.

Mātṛkā: Traditionally seven in number—Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī and Cāmuṇḍā. Later an eighth, under diverse names, has been added. According to the *Devī-māhātmya*, they appeared for the slaying of Raktavīja while in other Purāṇas they are said to have been created by Śiva in connection with the destruction of Andhākasura. In the Mātṛkā lists we have Yogeśvarī and Yamī, Vāruṇī, Narāsiṃhī, Vaināyakī, Śivadūtī, Raudrī, Kauberī, Kālī and Caṇḍikā often serving as the eighth Mātṛkā. In a list of sixteen Mātṛkās, we have Gaurī, Padmā Śacī, Medhā, Sāvitrī, Vijayā, Jayā, Devasenā, Svadhā, Svāhā, Puṣṭi, Dhṛti, Tuṣṭi, Kuladevatā and Ātmadevatā, *Mārkaṇḍeya* LXXXVIII, *Kālīka* LXI, *Varāha* XXVII, *Skanda*, Prabhāsa CCXXVII; *mātṛmaṇḍala* in *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* LX. 19; *matṛkānyāsa* in *Kālikā* LXXIII.

Medhā: Presiding goddess of Kāśmīra-maṇḍala, *Matsya* XIII.46.

Mīṇāksī: Holy resort at Cidambara. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38. 11.

Mṛgāvatī: Holy resort of the Yamunā. *Matsya* XIII.40; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.69; *Padma* I.17.198; *Skanda* V. 3.98.78.

Mukuṭeśvarī: Presiding goddess of Markot or Makota. *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.61; VII. 38.29.

Nandā: Goddess living in the *nandana* garden of heaven and having her worldly abode in the southern slopes of the Himalayas. *Devī* XXXVII.18; XXXVIII.5; *Matsya* XIII. 30; cf. Kaṇakanandā, *Skanda*, Prabhāsa, CCLXV; often identified with Kauśikī and Vindhyavāsinī.

Nandinī: Holy resort on the bank of Devīka, modern Deeg in Punjab. *Matsya* XIII. 37.

Nārāyaṇi: The supreme goddess; hymns to, *Harivaṃśa,* Viṣṇu III; resort in *nārā* or water, *Devī* XXXVII. 8; specially worshipped at Supārśva, *Matsya* XIII. 35.

Navadurgā: Shrine erected by Parasurāma at Mahodaya and Vaidiśa, *Devī*, XLIV.4.

Nīlāmbarī: Worshipped in the Nilagiri hills. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.10.

Nīlasarasvatī: Worshipped in Cīnadeśa or China. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.13.

Pañcapiṇḍikā: An attribute of Gaurī. *Skanda*, Nāgara, 178.

Parameśvarī: General name of the goddess for invocation. As the name of an individual goddess her abode is said to have been in Pātāla or nether region. *Matsya* XIII. 38; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.67.

Pārvatī: *Raghuvaṃśa* I. 1. Emergence and thousand names of, *Kūrma* I. 11-12; identification with Caṇḍikā, Ambikā, Kauśikī, etc., and invoked by gods for slaying demons, *Devīmāhātmya*, *Devī Bh.* V, 20-21; Satī's rebirth as Pārvatī, appointment by Himavat to attend Śiva, burning of Madana, her austeriers, marriage with Śiva, birth of Kumāra, *Kumārasambhava, Śiva* I. 7-19, *Liṅga,* I. 99-103; *Brahmavaivarta* IV 38-46; *Skanda*, Kedāra 21-27; changing of her complexion, Ibid., Kumārikā 22-29; Aruṅācala I, 3-4, II. 18. See under Gaurī, Kālī and Kauśikī; in terms of Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya, *Brahmavaivarta* III. 1-20; legends of Brahmā XXXIV-XXXVI, XXXVIII, LXXII.

Pāṭalā: Name of the goddess at Puṇḍravardhana. *Matsya* XIII. 35; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.64.

Piṅgaleśvarī: Name of the goddess on Payosni which is the river Palāsinī, a tributary of the Yamuna between the Ken and the Tons. *Matsya* XIII. 44.

Puruhūta: Presiding goddess of Puṣkara. *Devī Bh.* 7.30.58; VII. 38.20; *Matsya* XIII. 29.

Puṣkarāvatī: Name of the goddess at Prabhāsa. *Matsya* XIII. 43; *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.19 refers to the goddess as Puṣkararakṣiṇī.

Rādhā: Legends and worship of *Devī Bh.* IX. 50; *Brahmavaivarta* II, 56 ff; presiding deity of Vṛndāvana, *Matsya* XIII. 38.

Raktadantikā: Incarnation of Caṇḍikā or Ambikā mentioned in the *Devīmāhātmya*; cf. *Vāmana* LVI. 67-70; also called Raktacāmuṇḍā and Yogeśvarī, *Matsya* CCLXI. 33-37, *Varāha* XCVI; *Mālatimādhava* V; cf. *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.7.

Ramaṇā: Presiding goddess of Rāmatīrtha in Surpāraka (Modern Sopara) in the Thana district, Maharashtra. Rāmagiri near Nagpur may also be indicated. *Matsya* XIII. 40; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.69.

Rambhā: Goddess having resort in Malaya or southern part of the Western Ghats to the south of the Nilgiri, *Matsya* XIII. 28; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.57; *Padma* I. 17.186.

Ratipriyā: Name of the goddess at Gaṅgadvāra, i.e. Haridvāra, the place where the Ganges enters the plain from the Himalayas. *Matsya* XIII. 37.

Rātri: Also known as Niśā. Asked by Brahmā to blacken Umā. *Skanda*, Kumārikā, XXII. 46. 67-68; see Gaurī, Kālī, Kauśikī.

Raudrī, Raudrāṇī: See Mātṛkā. Origin from Trikalā *Varāha* XC. 29; exploits of, Ibid., XCVI; performer of terrible acts, *Devī* XXXVII. 11; Rudrāṇī, the presiding goddess of Kusasthali, *Devī* XXXVIII. 7; worshipped at Rudrakoṭi, at Ardhakoṭika, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.26; *Matsya* XIII. 31; description of *Kālikā* LXI. 45.

Rukminī: Presiding Goddess of Dvārāvatī. *Matsya* XIII. 38.

Rumādevī: Name of the Goddess at Vināyaka. *Matsya* XIII. 40; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.69. There are eight Vināyaka *tīrthas* in Maharashtra—Ranjangaon, Margaon, Theur, Lenadri, Ojhar, Pali, Madh and Siddhatek.

Sabarī: Identified with Vindhyavāsinī, Kālī and Pārvatī in *Gauḍavaho* 285 ff.

Śākambharī: Incarnation of Caṇḍikā in the *Devīmāhātmya*. cf. *Mbh.* VI. 23.9; *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.6.

Śakti: Creative energy of *brahman*, *Viṣṇu* I 3.1-5; hymns to, *Varāha* XCI.

Saṅjñā: Wife of Sūrya. *Śiva* VII. 59.

Śaraṇyā: Goddess protecting her devotees from poison, fire and fear, *Devī* XXXVII. 5.

Sarasvatī: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI 23.13; *Harivaṃśa* Viṣṇu III; legends of *Devī Bh.* IX. 4-7; *Brahmavaivarta*, Prakṛti IV-V.

Ṣaṣṭhī: The protectress of children. Legends of *Devī Bh.* IX. 46; *Brahmavaivarta* II. 43.

Satī: Episodes of *Mbh.* XII. 282-83; *Brahma* XXXIX; *Matsya* XIII; *Padma*, sṛṣṭi V, *Kūrma* I. 15; *Brahmāṇḍa* XXXI; *Kumārasambhava* I. 21; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30, *Kālikā* XVIII; *Śiva* V. 16-20; *Bṛhaddharma* II. 3-10.

Sāvitrī: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI. 23.13; *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III; legends of *Devī Bh.* IX. 26-31; *Brahmavaivarta* II. 25-28.

Siddhalakṣmī: *Skanda*, Prabhāsa, 132.

Siṃhavāhinī: Same as Durgā, slayer of Mahiṣa, *Devī* XXXVII. 14.

Siṃhikā: Presiding goddess of Kṛtāsauca. *Matsya* XIII. 44.

Śītalā: Small-pox goddess. *Skanda*, Āvantya XII.

Śivā: Abstraction; goddess bestowing well-being, XXXVII. 3; abode in the northern Vindhyas and also in Kurukṣetra where she is known as Jayantī, *Devī* XXXVIII. 4; defeated Śiva in dicing and assumed

the form of Śabari to win him back. *Skanda*, Kedāra, XXXIV-XXXV.

Śivadūtī: One of the Mātṛkās. She has twelve Yoginīs named Kṣemaṅkarī, Śāntā, Vedamātā, Mahodarī, Karālā, Kāmadā, Bhagākhyā, Bhagamālinī, Bhagodarī, Bhagārohā, Bhagajihvā and Bhagā. *Kālikā* LXI. 108-10.

Śivakāriṇī: Name of the goddess at Acchoda lake. *Matsya* XIII. 48; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.77; *Padma* I. 17.206; *Skanda* V. 3. 98.86.

Śrī: See Lakṣmī. Manu III. 89; Śrīmātā, *Skanda*, Arbuda XXII.

Svadhā: Legends of, *Devī Bh.* IX. 44; *Brahmavaivarta* II. 41.

Svāhā: Legends of, *Devī Bh.* IX. 43; *Brahmavaivarta* II. 40.

Tārā: Temple erected at the Mandara mountain by Paraśurāma; identified with Kālī in tantric tradition; very important goddess in Buddhist pantheon; earliest devotees of this goddess are mentioned in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*.

Trambyakā: Goddess who has sun, moon and wind as her eyes. *Devī* XXXVII. 6.

Trikulā: Goddess born of the energy of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. *Varāha*. XC. 11-25.

Tripurābhairavī: Worship of, *Kālikā* LXXV.

Tulasī: Legends of, *Devī Bh.* IX. 15-25; *Brahmavaivarta* II, 13-22; *Bṛhaddharma* I. 7-8.

Ugrācaṇḍā: Conception of, worship of, *Kālikā* LXI. 211.

Ujjanī: Presiding goddess of Ujjayinī, *Devī* XXXVIII. 8.

'Umā: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI.

23.9; *ardhanārīśvara* form described in *Matsya* CCLX; combined with Lalitā, *Skanda*, Prabhāsa, LXI, birth of, *Vāmana* XXI; description of, *Kālīka* LXI. 41-46.

Utpalākṣi: Presiding deity of Sahasrākṣa. *Matsya* XIII. 34; of Suvarṇākṣa, *Devī Bh.* VII. 38.28.

Vaiṣṇavī: Śakti of Viṣṇu: one of the Mātṛkās, origin from Trikalā *Varāha* XC. 28; killer of Mahiṣa. Ibid., XCII. 95.

Varārohā: Presiding deity of Someśvara. *Matsya* XIII. 43.

Vasumatī: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Harivaṃśa,* Viṣṇu III.

Vetālā: One of the names of the great goddess as giveṇ in *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III; identified with Kātyāyanī in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* 117.

Vijayā: Invoked as one of the names of the great goddess in *Mbh.* VI. 23.6: cf. *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III 1-3; demon-slaying goddess belonging to the category of Jayā, Jayantī, Ajitā and so forth, *Devī* XXXVII. 13.

Vimalā: Presiding goddess of Purusottama-Kṣetra, i.e. Puri in Orissa. *Matsya* XIII. 34; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.63; VII. 38.9; *Padma* I. 17.192; *Skanda* V. 3.98.72.

Vindhyavāsinī: Goddess dwelling in the Vindhyas and identified with Kauśikī, Caṇḍikā, Ambikā and *Kālīka*, often with Pārvatī and Umā or Gaurī, Niśā or Rātri; destroyer of the demon Ghora, *Devī* XXXVII. 12; installed at Candra mountain by Paraśurāma, Ibid., XLIV. 9; described as fond of wine, meat and beasts in *Mbh.* IV. 6.12 and *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III; described in *Gauḍavaho* (285-337) and identified with Śabari (305), Kālī or Pārvatī (287); mentioned in *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* I 1.45.

Virūpākṣi: Invoked in *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III.

Viśālākṣī: Invoked in *Harivaṃśa*, Viṣṇu III; described in *Skanda*, Prabhāsa, LXI; worshipped at Varanasi, *Matsya* XIII. 26; *Devī Bh.* VII. 30.55; at Avimuktakṣetra. Ibid., VII. 38.27.

Yogamāyā: Born of Yaśoda's womb and invoked by the gods. *Viṣṇu* V. 2.1-21; befooled Kaṃsa and spelt his doom. Ibid., V. 3.25-29; identified with Yoganidra.

Yoganidrā: Identified with Kauśikī and slayer of Śumbha-Niśumbha in *Harivaṃśa,* Viṣṇu II; described in *Kālikā* V. 51.

Yoginī: Companion goddesses endowed with great power, capable of doing good or bad to any individual, traditionally 64 in number. There are numerous lists of Yoginīs in which their names widely vary. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* list is quoted here: Brahmāṇī, Cāṇḍikā, Raudrī, Gaurī, Indrāṇī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Durgā, Nārasiṃhī, Kālikā, Cāmuṇḍā, Sivadūtī, Vārāhī, Kauśikī, Mahesvarī, Śasikārī, Jayantī, Sarvamaṅgalā, Kālī, Kapālinī, Medhā, Śivā, Bhīmā, Śākambharī, Śāntā, Bhrāmarī, Rudrāṇī, Ambikā, Kṣemā, Dhātṛ, Svāhā, Svadhā, Aparṇā, Mahodarī, Mahākālī, Bhadrakālī, Umā, Tārā, Vijayā and Jayā. Other names include Surasundarī. Mānoharā, Kaṇakavatī, Kāmeśvarī, Ratisundarī, Padminī, Naṭinī, Madhumatī, Śūlinī, etc. The *Skanda* has a bigger list of uncommon names. The Yoginīs seem to be multiplications of the Mātṛkās and are also known as Kāminis and Nāyikās.

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Jacket design: De sign Studio

ISBN 81-7304-324-8

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